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# STORIES FROM *Illinois* HISTORY



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This collection of stories about Illinois has been selected from a large group of similar items that have been sent in past months to newspapers in the state as a part of the Project's information service. Editors and their readers have received them so cordially that a larger field of usefulness seemed to be open to them - supplementary reading for home study groups and schools.

*Charles D. Mac Dougall*

State Supervisor



PART ONE

FROM BLOOMERS TO BONNETS



"BLOOMERS" IN ILLINOIS

In the early 1850's a movement for dress reform swept over the United States, putting a new word into the language and shocking or amusing the conservative. This movement was originated by Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, editor of a magazine called The Lily published at Seneca Falls, N. Y. The new costume resembled that of Turkish women and consisted of baggy trousers of ankle length with a tunic or coat reaching to the knees.

The "bloomer" fad soon reached Illinois and affected the costume of men as well as women. Evidence of this occurs in an item appearing in a Boston news magazine. Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, July 26, 1851:

"A La Bloomer - At Monmouth, Illinois, a new style for gentlemen's dress has made its appearance. It is a sack coat reaching to the hips, with pants closely fitting the body and limbs, and fastened at the knee, after the manner of the old style, with long stockings to match. Tassels are attached to each knee, and complete the suit. We suppose this to be a set-off to the change in the ladies' costume."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### PIONEERS POOLED RESOURCES

Descendants of pioneers now living in Highland, Illinois, tell with interest of a co-operative plan adopted by several Swiss families for settlement in that part of the state.

Shortly after the immigrants arrived at St. Louis, by way of the Mississippi, on October 1, 1831, they agreed to pool their possessions so that they might have the advantage of combined resources in the purchase of land, materials, and home supplies. An inventory showed cash of \$6,195.23 and a number of personal belongings, each of which was given a definite value.

Before continuing their journey to Illinois, they made several purchases: "Fritz," a horse, \$60.00; two cows and calves, \$20.00; three bee-hives, \$6.00; twenty-six chickens, \$2.25; twenty-one hogs and a cow, \$48.00. The breaking of a jug of whiskey, costing \$2.25, was considered to be a bad omen. However, another was purchased for \$3.37.

After crossing the Mississippi, they traveled 35 miles to the vicinity of the present location of Highland. There, they purchased at first 700 acres for a sum not mentioned in the narratives. Later, 350 additional acres were bought for \$2,727. For a brief period, the new settlers carried on their common tasks of breaking ground and building cabins, but before a year had passed differences developed, property was redistributed, and the plan abandoned.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### TRACKING DOWN A TURKEY

A railroad locomotive is, of course, an unusual weapon for a turkey hunt, but in 1874, a conductor on an Illinois railroad was said to have used one in capturing his Thanksgiving dinner. In the autumn of that year, he one day saw a flock of wild turkeys running along the track ahead of his engine when passing through the densely wooded region of Center Grove, east of Mokenca, Kankakee County.

Standing on the pilot, he waited for the locomotive to overtake the fleeing gobblers, according to an account in the Mokenca Reporter for December 10, 1874. As they rose into the air, the smokestack knocked down three or four of them. Clutching one of the larger turkeys by the feet, the conductor hauled it into the baggage car, where he found his prize weighed twenty-two pounds.

### ILLINOIS PRAIRIE FIRES

Like other great plains states, Illinois was often the scene of fierce prairie fires in the early years of its history, and even after the Civil War. Sometimes they threatened whole towns.

Commenting on such an occurrence, a newspaper writer in November, 1870, said: "There was an immense prairie fire between Peoria and Pekin, Thursday night. So it seems that Illinois has not ceased to enjoy these magnificent but costly exhibitions."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### PROFIT FROM MISFORTUNE

Hazards of conducting a retail business in pioneer Illinois have been recorded in an anecdote told of a merchant of Adams County.

According to an early account Asher Anderson opened a store in Quincy in 1827 in the barroom of Brown's Tavern, with a stock valued at less than \$1,000. The enterprise delighted the people of Adams County, for until this time nearly everything they used had been "home made," and the change from linsey-woolsey and rough cotton materials to pretty figured calico and smooth woollens was welcome.

Within a year, Anderson invested \$3,000 in a stock of goods to be sent up from St. Louis. Unluckily, the boat he had engaged sank, and his goods, consisting mainly of woollens, cottons, calicos, muslins, and ribbons, was lost in the Mississippi. When the boat was raised, the cargo was sent to Quincy.

Anderson, whose capital was nearly gone, put up his damaged goods at auction in the hope of salvaging something. Strongly enough, the stock was sold at prices that gave Anderson a considerable profit, for the bright colors of the cloth had run together in bizarre but not unpleasing patterns, and the gay materials caught the public fancy.

### SAME FAMILY - SAME FARM

An Illinois family near historic Jacksonville in Wayne County has owned and occupied the same farm for 108 years. The original title of part of the land, a certificate on sheepskin, dated 1830 and issued to Jeremiah Cox, the original owner, bears the signature of Andrew Jackson, then President of the United States. A receipt of 1838 shows taxes of \$4.47 on 295 acres of land. By 1885 descendants of the family had acquired 1,305 acres.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### LONG AND SHORT OF IT

"Onaquississippi," lengthy but pleasant sounding Indian name, today means simply Salt Creek. This stream bordering Mason and Menard as well as traversing Logan, DeWitt, and McLean counties, was known for a time as the North Fork of the Sangamon River. Salt Creek, which receives the waters of Lake Fork, Deer Creek, Kickapoo, and Sugar creeks, is said to drain more territory than does the Sangamon.

### HUGE PIECE OF COAL

In 1891, Illinois coal miners of Carterville, in Williamson County, extracted what was then considered to be the largest lump of coal ever mined. The piece, 25 inches high and wide and nine feet in length, weighed more than two tons. In 1893, it was sent to the World's Columbian Exposition.

### MORE NOISE, MORE STUDY

When pioneer school children in Illinois sat quietly at their rough hewn desks, schoolmasters shouted, "Study harder!" According to accounts of early Monroe County schools the resulting din of many small voices repeating words in their lessons was "terrific," but it sounded as if pupils were applying themselves to their work with more vigor. Spelling lessons were said to be the greatest noise makers.



### FLAMING FALL FOLIAGE

Autumn colored foliage of more than 4500 species of trees, shrubs, and vines delights thousands of visitors to roads and hiking trails of the Morton Arboretum, Du Page County. Since its establishment in 1921, the arboretum, named for J. Sterling Morton, pioneer in the reforestation movement, Secretary of Agriculture under Cleveland, and founder of Arbor Day, has attracted many visitors in the spring and fall. Designed as an experimental station for scientific research in horticulture and agriculture, the arboretum now extends over nearly 750 acres of ground and contains nearly every variety of woody plant able to survive the Illinois climate. A reference library and museum are housed in the administration building.

### HAVEN FOR LOST LIVE STOCK

Early settlers in Illinois had plenty of trouble in trying to keep cows and horses at home, for in pioneer times the whole state was open range country. Although strays frequently had notched ears - the common form of marking used by early Illinois farmers - it was sometimes difficult to find the owner of the mark, who might live a long way from the place where his roaming property was halted.

In 1827, residents of Wabash County facilitated the return of lost live stock by constructing a "stray pen" in the public square of Centerville, the county seat from 1825 to 1829. Strays were returned to this central point and the owner determined. At first it was sometimes necessary to advertise. Later, "A register of Live Stock Marks" of all residents was kept by the County Clerk, who was thus able to notify the owner of the stock promptly.





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### GOOD-BYE TO ANOTHER ALIBI

Fifty years ago the fish population of Illinois was greater than it is today, not because the finny folk do not like the state, but because its water area is not so large as it used to be. Experts declare, however, that as many fish inhabit each water acre today as were there a decade before the Civil War. In view of these findings, it seems that some unsuccessful anglers will have to look around for new alibis.

### TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The law of supply and demand of public school teachers was a problem in Illinois as far back as 1877. Legislative records reveal that unsuccessful attempts were made to abolish normal universities. In the same year it was proposed to suspend normal school departments in public schools on the grounds that "there would be three times as many normal school graduates as would be needed in any one year."

Normal schools were established by law in Illinois in 1857.

### ATHLETES WITHOUT LUXURIES

Considering the travel luxuries enjoyed by college athletes of today an item about the mode of travel of an Illinois athletic delegation in 1891 affords a marked contrast.

Appointed by the Athletic Association of the University of Illinois to represent the institution at an inter-state field day contest in St. Louis, the athletes donned old clothes and proceeded "to beat" their way from Champaign to St. Louis, one paper reported. After the competition was over, they returned by using the same method of securing transportation.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### FROM HORSE THIEF TO AUTO THIEF

Until recent years, anti-horse thief associations were fairly common throughout the Middle West. An Illinois newspaper of 1892 contained the following item: "The Cahokia Horse-Thief Detective Agency, recently organized under the special act of the legislature, has filed its certificate of the election of special constables by said association . . . seven good men."

In some instances, after the advent of the automobile, anti-horse thief associations were reorganized as groups to prevent the theft of automobiles.

### TEA FOR THE PIONEERS

An invitation to "take a cup of tea" in many early Illinois homes was likely to mean a new taste experience in beverages. Inasmuch as genuine tea was both difficult to obtain and very expensive, many substitute brews were used by the pioneers.

Among the more popular "teas" were those made from sycamore chips and redroot leaves. In Mercer County, the redroot leaves were first dried under a dutch oven, and then pulverized by rolling between the hands. When brewed and sweetened with honey, this drink, known locally as "grub hyson," was not hard to take, it was said.



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### LOOKING EASTWARD TO MISSOURI

A section of Illinois where the Mississippi River flows northwest and an observer may look east across the "Father of Waters" to the Missouri shore is a topographical oddity to be found in the southwestern tip of the state.

Around the southern part of the peninsula-like arm stretching in a southeasterly direction for about 14 miles, the Mississippi makes a great horseshoe bend. Here it takes a northwest course for a distance of nearly ten miles. Along this stretch of river, a similar arm from Missouri extends north for about ten miles into the hollow formed by Alexander County, on the one side, and Pulaski County on the other. An observer standing on the tip of Alexander County and looking east across the river would be gazing at a part of Missouri.

### PORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION

A couple of fat pigs or a good milch cow were accepted as one-third of room and board costs at McKendree College, Lebanon, in 1830. If the student could also bring a few sides of bacon, some pickled beef or pork, a barrel of flour, or a suitable amount of other produce, another third was deducted from his bill. This barter system was in common practice at other early Illinois colleges.

Two-thirds of the cost of a person's education was as much as the schools would allow in the form of farm goods. The remaining third for room and board, and the tuition fee, which at McKendree amounted to eight dollars for a five months' term, had to be paid in cash.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MULBERRY TREES IN ILLINOIS HISTORY

Any Illinois resident who has a white mulberry tree growing in his yard may be reasonably sure that ambitious pioneers planted it or its ancestor in the hope of developing profitable silk manufacture.

Many trees of this kind were brought to Illinois in 1839 to encourage silk production. Since long experiment had revealed that worms feeding on the native mulberry produced beautiful but useless cocoons, the white mulberry, known to be favored by silk-producing worms, was imported from Europe.

In 1839, the Illinois legislature went so far in fostering the silk industry as to pass an act offering a premium of one dollar "to every person producing ten pounds weight of cocoons of silk" from worms raised in the state. This bounty, and another for the reeling of merchantable silk from native worms, remained in force for five years.

### AN EARLY DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSE

Domestic science was taught in a public school in Knox County as early as seventy-five years ago. According to accounts of the time, a Mrs. Minard, the mother of four children, gave a course in this subject at the "Old Salem School" near Victoria, where she also instructed her pupils in the "three R's."

Girls in the school, according to their ability to spell, took turns rocking and feeding her small baby, who was regularly brought to the schoolhouse along with the other children in the Minard family.





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### DEDICATION IN DOWNPOUR

A sixty-nine word Presidential speech delivered in a driving rain to less than a dozen people dedicated a monument in Illinois. The memorial, on the courthouse lawn at Pontiac, honored "All Soldiers and Sailors of Livingston County."

On a June day in 1903 Theodore Roosevelt, then President of the United States, stepped off his train into a torrent of rain and was driven through flooded streets to the Courthouse grounds.

Accompanied by thunder and lightning, the chief executive proceeded with the unveiling. Facing the audience, he delivered, according to accounts, the following address: "Mr. Mayor and Fellow Citizens, I shall not try to make an extended speech. In the name of the people of Livingston County, by whom it has been erected, I dedicate this monument to those who have deserved it. I greet you all, and thank you for coming out in this rain, and I especially greet the members of the Grand Army of the Republic, and these National Guards."

He then was driven back to the train. Fifteen minutes had sufficed for the entire visit and dedication.

### TEMPERING A BAD TEMPER

The story of how an Illinois pioneer who had taken up land in Vermilion County was cured of a bad temper is still occasionally related there. According to the account, a committee called on him and threatened to refuse to loan him coals should his fire go out. In those times, when the common match of today was unknown, refusal of such a request for coals was like refusing food to a starving man. The threat never had to be carried out.



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### DOOR NAILS BY THOUSANDS

It has been carefully estimated that 9,702 wrought-iron nails stud the surface of the door which separated the upstairs living quarters from the early Illinois store and liquor dispensary on the ground floor of the original Bridges Tavern in Johnson County.

This famous log building, which has since become part of the barn on the Bridges' property, was associated with the early settlement of southern Illinois and the transfer of the Cherokee Indians. Broken flint a short distance northeast is evidence in support of the story that an Indian village was at one time located at this point.

### A LAD, A DAD, AND WORK

According to an historical account, a resourceful and determined Monroe County pioneer farmer was plowing a field in which stubble was so heavy that his son had to use a pitchfork to keep the blade clear. When the team was turned out at mid-day, the boy, before going home to eat his dinner, hid one of the collars, hoping to rest while his father made a new one. After a moment's reflection upon not finding the collar, the father promptly stuffed his leather breeches with straw and stubble and placed them about the neck of the horse. Bare-legged, he continued plowing for the rest of the afternoon and his disappointed and somewhat amazed son also kept busy.



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### CLAMOR FOR SILVER MONEY

The Illinois public welcomed eagerly in 1876 the issuance of silver coins to replace the despised fractional greenbacks, according to records of the time. On March 2 of that year, the Chicago Evening Journal prophesied that "silver dimes and quarters are likely to jingle in the pockets of the people at some indefinite time not far in the future."

Little more than a month later a second article announced the passage in the House of Representatives of a bill substituting silver coins -- 10, 20, 25, and 50 cent pieces -- for the fractional paper currency then in circulation. "The jingling substitute," said the Journal, "will be quite acceptable."

### WHITE HORSES FOR WISHING

The custom practiced by children in Illinois a generation ago of "spotting" or "stamping" white horses has practically died out. To "spot" a white horse, the child moistened the forefinger of the right hand with the tongue and laid the wet finger on the left palm. Then the left palm was struck with the clenched right fist.

After a hundred horses had been thus "spotted," a wish was made, which it was believed would come true unless one or more of the horses had a black hair in its coat. The decline of the custom is laid to the few white horses now seen in pastures and on highways because of the rise of motor travel.



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### SHIFTING SAND NEAR ANNAWAN

Set in the midst of a fertile Illinois farming district, the Green River dunes, a few miles north of Annawan in Henry County, stretch for miles to the west and east along what is known as the Sand Ridge. Here live numerous lizards and turtles, and the constantly shifting sands transform the landscape from day to day. During summer months the dunes are visited by many tourists.

### EARLY ILLINOIS JAIL

The first jail in Marion County, Illinois, must have seemed like a sort of cave to the wrongdoers it confined. Having neither doors nor windows, this dungeon-like prison was entered by a trap door in the roof, and a ladder was used to let prisoners in or out. The one-room log structure was built in 1830 at the cost of \$500.

### "WATCH YOUR STEP!"

Sometimes early Illinois dances represented recreation accompanied by grief. In 1836, dances in Champaign County were held on rough floors of split timbers, and the merry-makers executed the steps in their stockings or bare feet. Dances often resulted, it is said, in bruises, injuries, or even a missing toenail.





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### SENTINELS OF THE PALISADES

Illinois tourists have been wondering for years about three remarkable configurations of rock in the Mississippi Palisades State Park, near Savanna. Features of high-cheeked Indian are so noticeable that many persons insist they are the handiwork of an Indian sculptor in bygone times.

Within the park, which resembles the famous Palisades of the Hudson, may also be seen two columns named "Twin Sisters" and another formation called "Open Bible." Geologists agree that the images were carved by the Mississippi River during thousands of years of erosion.

### A CHALLENGE TO HUNGRY FOLK

Privations of pioneer life in Illinois did not seem to affect the menu at the Jacob Mason hotel of Farmington, Fulton County, according to an account of the famous game dinners served there. Hearty appetites of hardy guests were challenged by venison, wild turkey, prairie chicken, quail, squirrel, rabbit, turnips, celery, cabbage, beets, onions, potatoes, varieties of cakes and pies, cranberry, strawberry, and blackberry preserve, and choice of beverage.



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### HUNTING ON A LARGE SCALE

A wolf and deer hunt extraordinary in which more than 200 hunters combed the woods and prairies of four counties helped to make history in Illinois in 1846.

The large hunting party was organized to destroy wolves and to secure venison. On the morning of the hunt, men and boys from DuPage, Kendall, Kane, and Will counties formed a huge circle, the axis of which was Rob Roy Slough near the present village of Sugar Grove in Kane County. The encompassed area extended north to St. Charles, and south to Oswego. As the hunters closed in, they drove the game before them. Before the day ended, forty deer and scores of wolves were killed.

### RAPID GROWTH OF CHEESE INDUSTRY

Cheese in many varieties was once thought to be a key to wealth in Illinois, according to newspaper accounts telling of the boom in the cheese industry in the state between 1860 and 1880.

After 1863, when a cheese factory at Elgin began operations, many others were established, and two years later, there were seventeen in the state. By 1871 newspapers were beginning to joke about them. A newspaper item of May announced with mock seriousness that a "500 cow-power" cheese factory had just been erected at Decotah.



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### CHRISTMAS WEATHER NOTE

Unusual weather conditions during Christmas day, 1862, are recorded in the diary of an Illinois farmer, John Edward Young of Menard County, who kept a forty-five year account of his work and the weather, with observations on politics and the Civil War.

An excerpt from his diary, printed in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, records: "It rained without intermission all night accompanied with thunder & lightning. It has rained incessantly all day and the earth is deluged with water and the streams flood full. This is certainly one of the most remarkable christmas days that I have ever saw. It is more like an Aprile day than the twenty fifth of December. The ground has not been froze for a week past and the wheat and grass is green and growing. The day has been totally unfit for out door work I went to Athons late in the evening. It is reported that the boys from our neighborhood has had a fight with the rebblos at Jackson. There is great anxiety felt by all as we can get no particulers."

Entries in the diary show that normal weather conditions prevailed during most of the winter season.

### RECORD-MAKING TRAIN RUN

A train hauling 600 tons of coal from Illinois mines had all eyes of the railroad industry turned to this state in 1890 when it completed a run from Duquoin, in Perry County, to New Orleans without change of crew or engine. Newspaper accounts of the trip asserted that this train was not only the first but also the heaviest through freight in the history of railroad-ing, up to that time. The fireman, one Ed Adams, observed, "It was the most coal I ever shoveled, and a tough job."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### "THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS"

An Illinois event described by a newspaper reporter as "unparalleled in the annals of the show business," occurred at Peoria in the summer of 1871. On that date "Old John Robinson," the owner of a circus, "sold 27,736 tickets and gave four shows --one at ten o'clock; one at one o'clock; one at three o'clock; an another at seven o'clock."

The account says further, "Over 5,000 people were turned away who could not even get into the museum or menagerie to say nothing of the circus."

### 100-MILE WEDDING MARCH

How romance during the early days of Illinois overcame an unlooked for delay in the marriage ceremony is told in an early account of Jo Daviess County. In 1825 a young couple wishing to be married left the Fever River Settlements, near Galena on the south, and journeyed to Prairie du Chien, about one hundred miles to the northwest, before they could find someone authorized to perform the ceremony.

### BOYS AS PIONEER SETTLERS

The first permanent settlement in the eastern part of Clinton County, Illinois, is said to have been founded by two boys in their teens. In the winter of 1815-16 William and Simeon Walker camped on the Kaskaskia River a few miles south of Carlyle. Simeon was only eighteen and William was two years younger. The boys remained there alone during the winter, but in spring, other pioneers arrived.





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### WORLD FAMOUS GLASS SANDS

Aside from being ninth mineral producing state in the Union, Illinois is world famous for the glass sands found in the northern part of the state, around Ottawa, Wedron, and Utica. Of the national production of 2,750,000 tons of this mineral in 1937, Illinois produced 628,020 tons, or nearly 23 per cent.

Unlike most sands produced elsewhere, which are mainly used locally, sand found in this area is shipped all over the United States and commands a much higher price than the average. At the other end of the state, in Alexander and Union counties, there are very extensive deposits of silica, which is the state's second non-metallic mineral, after coal, in point of value.

Illinois also produced 19 per cent of the nation's molding sand, which is found near Alton and Rockton, and 13 per cent of polishing sand, which comes principally from the western edge of the Ottawa district, near Utica. Coal and fluorspar to the extent of 11 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, came from Illinois mines.

### AN EARLY ILLINOIS EXPORT

In the 1820's a leading manufactured export of Illinois was castor oil. One large factory manufacturing the product in Madison County produced 500 gallons in 1825; 800, in 1826; 1,000, in 1827; and more than 10,000 in 1830. The standard price at this time was \$2.50 a gallon.



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### KEEPING TIME WITH JOHN MILTON

In 1892, Illinois residents learned with considerable interest that a timepiece once owned by the famous English poet, John Milton, 1608-74, was on display in Chicago. A newspaper item asserted that the watch was made by Thuillier of Geneva in 1670, and still kept perfect time after more than 200 years of service. Its silver case included an alarm that ran 30 seconds. As Milton was blind during his later years, the numerals on the dial were raised.

### STEAMBOATS ON THE ILLINOIS

Steamboating on the Illinois River was at its height in the 1840's and 1850's. Among the vessels navigating the river at this time were the "Garden City," the "Ocean Wave," the "Cata-ract," the "Acadia," the "Prairie State," the "Polar Star," and the "Belle Gould." The "Prairie State" and the "Acadia" were burned in the great St. Louis fire of 1849 in which several blocks of buildings and twenty-three steamboats were destroyed.

### EXPLAINING MINT CREEK

Mint Creek, a small Illinois stream that empties into the Embarrass River west of Falmouth, in Jasper County, received its name for reasons less obvious than its relation to the popular aromatic herb. It seems that the heavily wooded area surrounding the creek was once the refuge of a gang of counterfeiters and that the name was suggested because of the large amount of counterfeit money said to have been circulated from the district many years ago.



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### WEALTH IN CLAY FIELDS

Pioneers who broke large tracts of Illinois' farmlands in the 1820's and 1830's little realized that the clay fields of McDonough, Warren, and Green counties would lead to the development of an important industry. The clay fields were first developed for stone-ware making in 1824. Farm drain tile was for years the principal product. After the Civil War, the tile and Pipe industry rapidly expanded, and the present time three of its great centers are at Macomb, Monmouth, and White Hall.

### AIDING ART IN ILLINOIS

As early as the 1870's art in Illinois was encouraged by associations that sought to interest the people of the state in the work of local as well as outside artists by means of lectures, shows, and fairs. According to the Joliet Signal of November 1, 1875, the first prize for sculpture at one of the early exhibitions was awarded to the statue "Hope," a marble "designed and manufactured" by C.C. Braun of Joliet.

Two years later the third annual exhibition of the Jacksonville Art Association was held in Oden Hall at Jacksonville. A newspaper report of the exhibition stated that the display included oil paintings, etchings, crayon works, heliotypes, and autotypes, borrowed from "private parlors and the different educational institutions of the city" and several works of "leading artists in St. Louis and other large cities."



### DANCERS VERSUS DEBATORS

In earlier days when debating as a pastime attracted much attention in Illinois, serious minded persons of LaGrange were somewhat surprised when they learned, near the close of 1878, that young people of the village were more interested in dancing than debating. According to a newspaper item the youthful inhabitants of that community had been denied the fun of dancing since the winter before, as a society had rented the only available hall. When the hall was vacated the debaters wanted to meet there, but a group of citizens decided that the dancers should use it and the debaters could wait until the end of the season.

### EARLY ILLINOIS MINORITY GROUP

Among the pioneers of Illinois was a minority described by Thomas Ford in his History of Illinois as "ignorant, illiterate, and vicious." These men, according to the author, who was governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846, usually wore coon-skin caps, buckskin trousers, hunting shirts, and leather moccasins, and carried butcher knives. They were sometimes referred to as "half-horse" and "half-alligator men," "flat-footed boys," "butcher knife boys," and "huge-pawed boys."

It is said that this group was greatly feared by some political candidates of the day, who found difficulty in making their platforms acceptable to it as well as to other citizens.





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### FLEECE, WORK, AND LAUGHTER

Among early settlers in some parts of Illinois, "wool pickin'" parties, as well as "corn huskings," "sewing bees," and "log rollings," made fun out of hard work.

An historical account of Mercer County describes a "wool pickin'" as a strictly feminine activity. Conversation and laughter lightened the tedious task of combing the fleece to remove all dirt particles and to straighten it for carding before spinning and weaving.

Every year at sheep shearing time, girls and matrons for miles around were invited to the "pickin'" parties. Popularity of the events was increased because after work was over, the parties became social gatherings attended by the men.

### SPUR TO INVENTIVE GENIUS

A homemade Illinois grist mill, constructed from a hollow stump and an iron wedge, furnished cornmeal, principal ingredient of pioneer larders, to a Will County community during early days. A small portion of grain was placed in the hollowed stump and the wedge, suspended from a spring pole, was raised and lowered to break the kernels. Hot water poured over the grain helped to remove the husks.

Another example of how necessity fostered invention during pioneer days may be noted in a corn cracker resembling a huge coffee mill used in Jo Daviess County in 1828. Housed in a large dry goods box, the cast iron cracker, the hopper of which held about a peck of corn, served residents of Galena for many years.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### "THE LATCHSTRING IS OUT"

Early settlers in Illinois, like pioneers in other parts of the country, frequently used wooden latches to bolt their doors. A leather thong, stout cord, or rope was used to raise or lower the lock. If the house owner wished the door to be opened from the outside, he permitted the thong to dangle from a small hole near the bolt. This device led to the expression, "The latchstring is out." To passersby it meant that they were welcome. When the owner wanted to lock his door, he merely moved the string inside.

### DANGER OF TOO MUCH KNOWLEDGE

Tragi-comic reverberations of the death of Socrates of Athens in 399 B. C., occurred in Illinois some 2300 years later. A copy of the Alton Courier of September, 1859, contained an account of a speech delivered in Alton, which had so many classical references that the pioneer audience was puzzled. After a dramatic explanation of Socrates' drinking the fatal hemlock potion, the orator was interrupted by an early settler who wanted to know why the Greek philosopher was forced to drink it.

"Because he knew more than his neighbors," the speaker replied.

Immediately one man in the audience hurried home. He announced that a "bunch of Athenians," whom he imagined to be Yankees and others, "were coming to give poison to them who knows more than their neighbors."

"That means you, Pa," the family agreed, and belongings were at once packed. Next day the family started for Arkansas.



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## S t o r i e s f r o m I l l i n o i s H i s t o r y

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### HUNGER, ICE, AND HEROISM

Typical of the tales of enterprise and heroism connected with early Illinois steamboating is the story of Captain Clark and his steamer, "Josephine," of St. Louis.

In the winter of 1858, miners of Galena were short of provisions, particularly flour. Unheralded, Captain Clark set forth in the "Josephine" with a full cargo of provisions. A mild winter made it possible for him to break through the ice of Fever River and dock at Galena in February, a feat never before accomplished. An early chronicler records that the captain was received with joyous amazement by the residents.

The "Josephine" arrived just in time, however, for the temperature dropped rapidly and nearly a week passed before the vessel could start on its return trip to St. Louis.

### DOGS AS AIDS TO EDUCATION

The more dogs, the more tax, was decision of an early Illinois board of supervisors. A dog tax law was passed in April, 1861, by the supervisors of Brown County, providing that one dog could be kept free of tax. For the second an assessment of \$1 was made, and three dogs cost the owners \$2. Residents who possessed more than three dogs were charged "double thereafter." Revenue from the dog tax went into the public school fund.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### CENSORING A "SEA OF SLUSH"

Now only a memory, privately owned highways were once fairly common in Illinois, and sometimes a nuisance, according to a letter sent to the editor of a pioneer newspaper in 1879.

"It is in the shape of extortion," the writer complained, "of money for tolls, for the privilege of navigating through a sea of slush, mud, and pitch-holes with which the road is 'improved.'"

In the early days of the state, however, there was seldom enough money in the treasury to build public roads, and road making was at one time required of settlers. Sometimes "improvements" consisted merely of notches cut in trees along the route.

Toll rates for privately owned roads were often set by county commissioners. One list of regulations provided for a charge of not less than twelve and one-half cents for a man and horse; twenty-five cents for a one-horse wagon; six and one-fourth cents for each horse or head of cattle, and two cents for each hog or sheep.

### MORE FARE FOR THE FAIR

During the famous "crinoline days," when women in fashion wore dresses of bulky material, Illinois railways faced a perplexing problem. One company considered a plan whereby "crinoline must suffer a partial collapse or pay for the luxury of expansion." It proposed to place numerals on the seats to show how much space could be occupied for one fare. "The luxury of a regular spread-eagle, fully-inflated, double-expansive car ride will be in the neighborhood of forty cents," an official predicted.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### BRINGING THE PAST TO LIGHT

Although the most important archeological expeditions in Illinois have been made during the decade, 1928-1938, as early as 1892 a pre-historic ruin on top of a high hill in Calhoun County yielded significant copper and stone relics, as well as a number of skeletons.

Unusually valuable evidence of early life have only recently been found by scientists from the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago in what was perhaps, a pre-historic fortification in Massac and Pope counties. Made of thick logs, and strategically located behind one of the sloughs of the Ohio River, it may have protected a village of aboriginal "mound builders." Ten mounds on the old Kincaid Homestead in Massac County, and nine mounds in Pope County, on the farm belonging to E. E. Lewis, comprise the group. Archeologists, who have been digging there each summer since 1934, call it the "Kincaid Site."

Other expeditions, directed by Dr. Fay Cooper-Cole, of the University, have worked in Rock Island, Adams, Will, Cook, DuPage, Jersey, St. Clair, and Fulton counties.

### CHEERS FOR A NEWSPAPER PRESS

In 1855, roars of guns and cheers of a populace greeted the arrival of a newspaper press in an Illinois town. Citizens of Kewanee raised a subscription for the purchase of the Henry County Gazette, then published in the neighboring town of Cambridge, and arranged for the moving of all the equipment. When the printing press arrived in Kewanee a celebration followed. The new paper was called the Henry County Dial.



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## S t o r i e s   f r o m   I l l i n o i s   H i s t o r y

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### FAMOUS NATURAL ROCK BRIDGE

Hidden among the hills of Jackson County within two miles of the village of Pomona, in southwestern Illinois, a natural rock bridge is considered by tourists to be among the remarkable features of the celebrated Ozarks region. Research workers comparing its dimensions with those of a similar bridge in Rock-bridge County, Virginia, found that the Pomona bridge, with a span of 100 feet, a height of 80 feet, and a width of nine feet, is ten feet longer, but narrower and not so high. Both bridges were formed by erosion.

### SUNBONNETS AND LITERATURE

The thousands of readers in Illinois who today enjoy the privileges of public and school libraries probably would not associate love of books with the lowly sunbonnet. In 1870, however, the Sunbonnet Club of Hoopeston, Vermilion County, was formed to support a library association. Sunbonnets were in evidence at every meeting, and the secretary, treasurer, and corresponding secretary were all named Laura.

### FROM COAL TO QUAIL

The swamps and prairies around Turino, once a thriving Illinois mining settlement in the southwest corner of Will County, now abound in plant and animal wild life. Here bitterns, herons, quail, killdeers, and smaller birds of the open country flock in great numbers to find refuge. Foxes occasionally are seen, and during winter coyotes sometimes make their way into the region.

Turino, it is said, was named during boom days by a miner for his native city in Italy.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MAKING 100-POUND TRAVELERS HAPPY

In one instance at least it was an advantage to travelers in pioneer Illinois to be under weight. A stage coach line operating in the southern part of the state in 1820 specified that each passenger must be considered to weigh exactly 100 pounds - "to be paid for accordingly, and a greater or less weight in proportion."

### SOUTHERN IMMIGRATION TO ILLINOIS

Immigration to Illinois from the South showed a decided increase in the period immediately following 1818, when the state was admitted into the Union. In that year, it has been estimated, two-thirds of the people were of southern stock.

Opposition to slavery, pressure of the plantation system on small farmers, who wilted under the daily struggle to make a bare existence, and an intense desire for social equality prompted many to move. During the late 1820's, the lure of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of lead in Jo Daviess County, urged scores of Southerners to bundle their families and possessions into wagons and start with all speed for mines in the Galena region.

Perhaps the underlying explanation for most of the migration may be found in the strong attraction that the wilderness exerted upon most of these people. They were generally frontier folk and stirred by a constant restlessness to seek new lands.

This surge of immigration from the South had decreased considerably, however, shortly before the Civil War. In 1850 three-fourths of the population of Illinois is said to have been Northern and European stock.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### TRIALS OF EARLY TRAVEL

One of the early railroads in Illinois, the state owned Meredosia-Springfield line, completed in 1842, operated on wooden rails covered with thin strips of iron held in place by spikes. After numerous mishaps, the locomotive was abandoned on a siding where it had been derailed. There it stood for many months, until a resourceful purchaser equipped the wheels with iron tires two feet wide, hoping to use the outfit as a sort of pleasure omnibus on the muddy country roads and prairies. During its first and only trip as a horseless carriage, the little engine had to be helped most of the way by oxen. Then it was again abandoned and later broken up for scrap iron.

### HIGH HOPES FOR INVENTION

A "type-writing machine" exhibited at Quincy, Illinois, in 1876, was hailed by a newspaper writer of that city as "an invention certain to attract great attention throughout the country."

In describing the new invention, the reporter pointed out its resemblance in size and general appearance to the family sewing machine. Writing, he explained, "is done simply by touching the keys, which are compactly arranged in four rows, of eleven each, and may be operated by any finger of either hand."





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### CHRISTMAS LETTER TO THE HOME FOLKS

An unusual Christmas celebration in Mexico ninety-two years ago is described in a letter of a twenty-year old Illinois youth who fought in the Mexican War. The letter, which was written in German, is one of a series translated for the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society.

On December 25, 1846, Adolph Engelmann of Belleville, St. Clair County, writing to his parents from his camp near Saltillo, said in part,

"On this day we had marched 20 miles and a total of 116 miles in four days, so it is no wonder the men had sore feet and tired legs, worn out horses and mules, and that when the day drew to a close the Inf. Regts. were without men. During this whole march, which I made easily, I only put up my tent once. In the foot hills enroute are many evergreens which gave us the idea of a Christmas tree. I got some flour, sugar and annis seed and two ft. of sperm candles, a couple of young fellows in the company made some right good cookies and we decorated the tree. I wish you could have seen it."

### PERSIMMON TIME IN ILLINOIS

In the forested areas of southern and central Illinois, the persimmon tree abounds in wild state. Immediately after the first heavy frost, the fruit becomes palatable, and its temptingly spicy quality is a popular lure, especially for youths of Saline and neighboring counties, who scour the woods in search of the mellow "date plums."



### VALUABLE MINERAL SUPPLY

Rosiclare, an Illinois village in Hardin County, has the distinction of being in the center of a region believed to contain the largest fluorspar deposits in the world. Of little value commercially when discovered here in 1842, fluorspar was at first mined only on a small scale. Later, however, it was found to be a valuable metallurgical flux, and for almost half a century several large mining companies have been extracting and refining the mineral in great quantities.

### HISTORIC ILLINOIS HIGHWAY

"Trace Road," which passes through Olney, Richland County, to form its main artery, is listed among historic Illinois highways. Years ago, this famous road an Indian and buffalo trail, led from "Bear Grass," now Louisville, Kentucky, to Cahokia, a few miles below East St. Louis, on the Mississippi River. It was one of the much traveled east to west routes during pioneer days, and was followed by early stage and mail lines.

### BOOSTING VEGETABLE CROPS

Fertile soil and climatic advantages make Franklin County one of the highly productive Illinois areas for vegetable raising. Agricultural authorities have called the soil in this part of the state "quick soil," for it is more than ordinarily responsive to fertilizers. The long growing season here also favors large yields. Farmers have been advised to rotate their crops systematically to secure the best results from these natural advantages.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### NEW YEAR WEATHER NOTE

According to the forty-five year diary kept by John Edward Young, an Illinois farmer of Menard County, New Year's Day, 1864 dawned with the thermometer registering 23 degrees below zero and a "searching wind from the northwest." The entry for that day, which appears in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, describes "the coldest day that has been in Illinois for 30 years."

Young was suffering at the time from ague, which no doubt caused him to feel keenly the severity of the weather: "It ceased snowing about twelve o'clock last night. . . . This has been the most terrible storm I ever experienced. The snow would have been a foot deep if it had lain but it is fearfully drifted and great quantities of sheep, hogs and fowls of all kinds have perished. Some farmers has lost as high as four hundred sheep. It is almost impossible to leave the fire this morning without being frosted. The boys made out with great difficulty to get feeding done. I shook an hour and a half to-day which was rather a cool operation, considering the season."

### NO NICKNAME AND "SMILES DAY"

Unlike many towns and villages of Illinois, Rushville, the seat of government for Schuyler County, is without a nickname and as far as is known no attempt has ever been made to give it one. Early in the nineteenth century before the community became incorporated it was known as Rushton. Here in the heart of the rolling prairie country between the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, a "Smiles Day" is observed annually in October. On this occasion, residents and county neighbors promote a carnival and other events to foster a better understanding of community interests.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### BELIEFS ABOUT NEW YEAR'S EVENTS

In some sections of Illinois, events occurring on New Year's Day are regarded as omens for the ensuing year. In Champaign County, for example, there are old settlers, it is reported, who still hold that if one's pockets are empty on New Year's Day, they will be empty the rest of the year. To ward off poverty, pockets should be stuffed with something.

Bad luck is believed to follow if one stumbles on the first day of the year, but good luck comes if a person enters a new home for the first time on New Year's Day. Moreover, if it rains on January first, the year will be one of floods, it is said, and if one wants to make a tree grow, he should wish it Happy New Year.

### SMOKING OUT RESENTFUL PUPILS

One of the many duties of a schoolmaster in pioneer Illinois was to arrive at the school house early and build the fire. On one occasion an unpopular teacher of Cass County discovered that his pupils, arriving ahead of him, had started the fire and barred the door.

While the youthful rebels made merry in their warm stronghold, the resourceful teacher climbed to the roof and placed a wide board over the chimney. Within a few moments, the gasping, coughing youngsters ran for the open air, and the schoolmaster calmly entered and began his day's work.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WHEN LINCOLN STUDIED LAW

Illinois tourists visiting New Salem State Park in picturesque Menard County marvel at the reconstruction of a whole town that honors one man - Abraham Lincoln.

Here on the banks of the beautiful Sangamon River, the village of New Salem was established at the turn of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and to this picturesque valley settlement Lincoln came in 1831. He remained for six years to live an eventful chapter in his early career - a storekeeper, postmaster, surveyor, reader of law, and volunteer in the Black Hawk War. At the close of this period he departed for Springfield, a lawyer and a re-elected member of the state legislature.

Restoration of New Salem has for years claimed the extensive research and devoted labor of many experts in gathering a remarkable collection of early furniture and utensils, and reconstructing buildings and grounds. Roads, rustic fences, and camp areas have been made ready by groups of C. C. C. workers. So carefully has the plan for restoration been developed that visitors commonly gain the impression of actually living in a pioneer community of a century ago.

State routes 123 and 97 are the principal highways leading to this historic area, 20 miles northwest of Springfield.

### FAMOUS FOSSIL DEPOSITS

Just north of the Mazon River bridge on U.S. 52, in Illinois near Morris, Grundy County, is one of the most remarkable fossil deposits in the United States. The fossils are usually enclosed in rounded pieces of shale and consist of impressions of flowers, ferns, and leaves.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### FAST GOING IN 1839

In 1839, a mail stagecoach required twenty-two hours of bumping over unimproved wagon trails across Winnebago, Boone, McHenry, Du Page, and Cook counties to make the 87-mile trip from Rockford to Chicago.

A woman traveler who made the trip in that year wrote: "The stage was a commodious affair, and left Chicago at two o'clock in the morning. There were ten passengers. At day-break we reached a country tavern where we breakfasted on Rio coffee, fried fat pork, potatoes and hot saleratus biscuits. We crossed on the ferry at Rockford at midnight. We had to get out and climb the sand bank after crossing the river."

A "fast mail" schedule of two days for the 160-mile jaunt from Chicago to Galena was begun the following year, with the Chicago to Rockford portion "run through" from dawn to dusk, or about 15 hours, during the summer and fall. The fare for this "spcedy" trip was \$8 to Rockford and \$13 to Galena.

### TALL GRASS WAVING

When the first settlers came to Illinois they observed that most of the prairie land was thickly covered with a species of grass tall enough to hide the movements of a herd of cattle. This native "bluestem" has been described as billowing in the wind like a vast inland sea. Other grasses, of which Kentucky blue grass is most common, have now largely replaced the bluestem. However, the original native grass may still be found at more than one hundred points in the state - in old cemeteries, along railroad rights of way, and in other uncultivated spots.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WESTWARD TO SHARON

An Illinois tradition still related by some early settlers holds that removal of the national capital to a site in the southwestern part of Fayette County was once considered.

According to the story, during the War of 1812, in which the Capitol and the White House were burned, authorities planned to transfer the seat of national government from Washington to some inland point. The Illinois site suggested, it is said, was named Sharon. Remoteness from the Mississippi River, which made it reasonably secure from invasion by water, and strong fortifications near Kaskaskia, were thought to be in its favor.

No record has as yet been found to show that the plan ever came to official notice.

### ONE BONNET A YEAR

Because of the scarcity of manufactured goods in early Illinois, pioneer women seldom wore elaborate millinery. According to records relating to pioneer social customs, a folded kerchief worn peasant style was the usual feminine headgear in the 1820's.

Only well-to-do women of that day could afford bonnets, and these were almost always made of straw. One hat ordinarily lasted for the entire year, but the trimming was sometimes changed to suit the season.



PART TWO

FROM LEATHER TO SIDEWALKS





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### LEATHER GOODS BY PIONEERS

A tan vat was almost a necessity on a well equipped farm in pioneer Illinois, as shoes, harness, and many articles of clothing, were frequently made at home from hides of animals. These primitive vats were usually pits dug in the ground and lined with oak planks.

Before being tanned, a hide was first scraped well and cleaned of hair. Then it was placed in the vat, which had been partially filled with water containing a quantity of wood, bark, or leaves bearing tannin. There it remained until it was thoroughly tanned and seasoned. After being dried and softened, it was fashioned into jackets, trousers, shoes, belts, and harness by members of the household.

### TREES AND GOOD CROPS

One reason advanced by historians for the settlement of Illinois at a later date than Tennessee and Kentucky is that many farmers once believed land bearing no trees was not fertile. The prairies were considered almost worthless for settlement by pioneers from the forested areas of the South and the East.

"A great part of the territory is miserably poor," Monroe is quoted as having written to Jefferson, "especially that near Lakes Michigan and Erie, and that upon the Mississippi and the Illinois consists of extensive plains which have not had from appearances, and will not have, a single bush on them for ages. The districts, therefore, within which those fall will never contain a sufficient number of inhabitants to entitle them to membership in the Confederacy."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WITH LA SALLE IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

Early one winter, about 250 years ago, the French explorer, La Salle and his faithful lieutenant, Henry de Tonti, with a small group of followers, camped in an Indian village on the bluffs of the Illinois River opposite the site of the present city of Peoria. Their journey from Canada down the St. Lawrence River and through the Great Lakes had been arduous, yet they began almost at once to build a fort, which historians believe was the first constructed by Frenchmen in the West. It was named Fort Crevecouer - the fort of the "broken heart" - and a few months later the garrison mutinied and burned it.

For more than two centuries the exact location of the stronghold was uncertain, but after an extensive research the present site of Fort Crevecouer Memorial State Park was selected by the Illinois State Historical Society as the most probable location. Here a ten foot granite shaft has been erected on the highest point in the seventeen and a half acre park.

The rich historical background of Fort Crevecouer and a fine view of the broad river, meandering southward, to the Mississippi through scenic sections of Peoria and Tazewell counties, lure thousands of visitors every year to the park, many of whom reach it by way of US 24 or State 100.

### LODGING AND FOOD FOR NIGHT HERONS

One of the provisions in Illinois for the protection of wild fowl is a rookery on a farm near Paw Paw, in Lee County. Here in a larch grove a quarter of a mile long and 300 yards wide, hundreds of black-crowned night herons make their homes. The noisy birds fly daily 25 miles to swamps bordering the Illinois and Fox rivers for food.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### PORTRAITS WHILE YOU WAIT

Traveling artists in pioneer Illinois who made "free hand" portraits and sketched farm homes, competed in the 1850's with daguerreotype artists, who carried their equipment in large cars mounted on low wheels. In the Garrollton Gazette for June 3, 1854, a notice informed the public that the Frailey daguerreotype car would be in White Hall within a few days. The car was described as being "fully equipped with a sky-light room," and the artist was said to be very capable.

Although permanent studios succeeded this early type of photographic service, rolling studios may occasionally be seen today both in town and country.

### ALWAYS ROOM FOR MORE

On one occasion at least during the early days of settlement in Illinois, pioneer hospitality provided a night's lodging for nineteen persons in a log cabin of 12 by 16 feet.

With the assurance, "There is always room in this country!" a group of travelers from Washington to the Mississippi joined a number of other guests at the home of a settler near Utica, Fulton County. After a supper of bacon, corn bread, honey, and coffee, which was ready soon after the unexpected additional travelers from the capital arrived, the few chairs and tables were cleared away and the floor covered with buffalo robes and blankets for sleeping. Conditions were described as crowded, in the reminiscences of one of the guests.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### SHADE, APPLES, AND CHESTNUTS

It is to John Wood, governor of Illinois in 1860, that the people of Adams County are indebted for many of the fine trees that shade the lawns of Quincy and the surrounding countryside. He gave Quincy its first park and promoted the planting of trees along its streets.

In the spring of 1820, while living in Pike County, Wood made a journey on foot to St. Louis, more than a hundred miles away, and brought home a pint of apple seeds to plant. In the fall of the same year, he made another foot journey to a distant orchard on the Mississippi and procured a quantity of apple seeds from a cider mill.

In 1827, the first apples grown in this section were gathered from his trees, and it is also believed that the first chestnut trees in the region were planted by Wood in 1830.

### PENSIONS FOR GOOD STORIES

When in 1832, a law was passed giving pensions to veterans of the American Revolution, ex-soldiers who had moved to Illinois began at once to make application for benefits provided in the congressional act. If legal discharges from the army had been lost or never received, proof of military service could be established by a recital of incidents that agreed with information sent by government officials to the various county boards. Men who had served under Washington told county commissioners about the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and other engagements.

How well Montgomery County veterans painted word pictures of their war days when they assembled in the log cabin courthouse at Hillsboro is revealed in records of the time. After each story heard by the attentive county commissioners is the following notation: "And the said court do hereby declare their opinion that this man was a revolutionary soldier and served as he states."





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### CALLING ALL GOOD SPELLERS

If a proposal made by Thomas Jefferson in 1784 had gone into effect, residents of Illinois might find themselves living in a state with the same latitude and longitude but with a name that would delight prize-winning spellers.

According to historical accounts Jefferson proposed to divide the then newly acquired Northwest Territory into seven states under a temporary government. The names he selected for them were Assenisipia, Chersonesus, Metropotamia, Michigania, Polispia, Polypotamia, and Sylvania. It has not been learned which one of these names was reserved for the area that became Illinois.

### HEROINE OF THE OZARKS

Bigsby Cave and Gorge, near Ford's Ferry, is not only an Illinois scenic spot, but also the center of many incidents and legends, concerning early settlement of Hardin County. The cave and gorge were named for Dr. Anna Bigsby, pioneer physician and teacher, who established the first school on Rock Creek, and in attending the sick throughout the section earned for herself the title, Heroine of the Ozarks.

Local tradition holds that "Dr. Anna," as she was familiarly called, was once captured by outlaws and escaped by a perilous leap from a bluff near the cave. Some people report seeing a nebulous light floating over Bigsby Gorge and refer to it as "Dr. Anna Light." They explain that it is the spirit of the heroine guarding a sum of her money supposed to be hidden in the cave.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### EARLY SNOW PLOWS AND A STORM

Before railroads had developed snow plows so powerful that they could be seldom blocked, Illinois travelers were sometimes hard pressed when trains were marooned during storms that swept over Illinois prairies. The writer of a letter of 1877 describes a heavy snowfall that had occurred some years before. A train, according to the account, was blocked for days "in one of the boundless prairies of Illinois, and the passengers, nearly all of them business men and members of the state legislature, were reduced to such an extremity" that they had to burn the furniture of the coaches in order to prevent death by freezing.

### RAIN AND RESOURCEFUL PIONEERS

When a number of old settlers of Illinois met in 1881, a pioneer of Iroquois County described the season of 1844 as "the wettest he ever knew." A newspaper report of the meeting gives an account of difficulties he experienced during the wet spell.

Wheat was very scarce, the pioneer recalled, and grain could not be taken to the grist mill because roads were impassable. He ground six bushels of wheat in a coffee mill, and his wife bolted the meal through a coarse cloth. Bread made from this flour was the principal diet of the family for about five months.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WORRYING ABOUT THE EARTHS' AXIS

A quarter of a century before Illinois began to develop its petroleum resources, residents of the state pondered with interest a warning given by a man who had done some investigating in the oil fields of Pennsylvania.

In 1879, an Illinois newspaper reported that in the opinion of the visitor, "the Government ought to interfere at once, and put a stop to further pumping and boring for oil. He is quite certain the oil is drawn through these wells from the bearing of the earth's axis, and that the earth will cease to turn when the lubrication ceases."

### ANIMALS, BOTH SMALL AND GREAT

As early as the 1830's, some wild animals once common in Illinois were forsaking its woods and prairies. A pioneer writing of the years of 1837 and 1838 observed that buffalo and elk were no longer seen and that panthers and wild cats were only occasionally reported. Hunters, however, could find plenty of deer, raccoons, and wolves.

Long before any one was around to fear these or other animals, giant creatures, now extinct, roamed over the same land. In 1902, a Scott County farmer, while draining a swamp near Deer Lick Spring, about five miles from Winchester, found skeletal remains of mastodon, a great buffalo, and an early species of horse.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### UNIFORMS IN A HURRY

How a company of Illinois soldiers during the Civil War was outfitted with uniforms in record time is related in an article on General Stephen A. Hurlbut in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society of July 1935. On Monday, May 6, 1861, Hurlbut, then a captain, was ordered from Belvidere to Freeport with his company of 115 soldiers.

On the following day, at a meeting of Belvidere citizens, it was decided to present the company with "a uniform military dress." That night, a committee went to Chicago to purchase the materials, which were received Wednesday evening. On Thursday and Friday all of the tailors and most of the women of the community gathered in the Union Hall to cut and sew.

By Saturday morning the garments were finished, and the company set out for Freeport dressed in well tailored uniforms.

### BLACK WALNUT FOR A MANSION

The Kaskaskia home of Shadrach Bond, first territorial delegate in Congress from Illinois and first governor of the state, was one of the fine mansions of early Illinois. When the residence was demolished in 1892, a newspaper printed a brief description of it. The entire framework, except joists and rafters, was of solid black walnut, a wood once plentiful in the Middle West but now so scarce that it is used chiefly in fine cabinet work.

Bricks made especially for Bond in Pittsburg were almost twice as large as those ordinarily found. The house originally stood on a farm of 340 acres. However, by 1892 a change in the course of the Mississippi had reduced the tract to 15 acres.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### SHEEP IN PIONEER TIMES

In pioneer Illinois, when present day facilities for keeping meat fresh were unknown, a single sheep would be butchered and divided with neighbors so that it could be used quickly. The fleece was carded, spun, and finally woven by the housewife on a hand loom, and colored by home-made vegetable dyes.

Since candles were commonly used for illumination during pioneer times, tallow from sheep was an important item in making them. Most pioneer households had tin molds for this purpose. Much care had to be taken in pouring the tallow so as to avoid air bubbles.

### LAND VALUES AND GOOD ROADS

Long before Illinois began "to pull itself out of the mud" by a statewide good roads program, farmers deplored the loss in land values because of unimproved highways. A writer in the Geneseo Republic for May 23, 1890 declared that the loss amounted to \$160,000,000 and that extra hauling cost \$1,346,000 annually.

"On Illinois roads," it is pointed out "a full load for a two-horse team can be carried for three months of the year, two-thirds of a load for three months, and half a load for six." The writer argued that if the state "spent \$250,000,000 on good roads the total interest on this sum would still leave enough of the sum spent in hauling to build a new state capitol every year, to say nothing of the nervous wear and tear and the prismatic profanity induced by country roads when the frost is coming out."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### GONE ARE THE DAYS

Early residents in some sections of Illinois generally regarded new amusements with suspicion. In the late 1870's when the older residents of Oak Park, for example held a party in which the "festive waltz and other new-fangled dances" were ruled out, the event was described as a "walk-around."

Approved pastimes for boys in a part of western Illinois included principally hunting and the time-honored game of horse-shoes. The drama seems to have been frowned on. Reading was encouraged for the most part only within the bounds of school and college libraries.

The "mum sociable," an invention of the 1870's was devised to provide money for benevolent enterprises by fining players who spoke during the period of the "game." One resident who recalls the "mum sociable," says that he did not find it entertaining.

### READY FOR EASTER PARADE

Easter parades in the pioneer years of Illinois were none the less colorful because the wearing apparel came from the family loom.

Correctly attired young women of Mercer County are said to have looked very gay in home-dyed linsey-woolsey dresses with matching sunbonnets, and the young men proudly wore tow, or coarse flax, trousers, white shirt, high stiff collar, and home-made straw hat.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### POPULAR BEVERAGES AND PIONEERS

Illinois pioneers would have been amused had they known that coffee would some day be considered as much an American drink as tea is English. When introduced to more settled communities, early settlers were somewhat scornful of such beverages as tea and coffee. Some "old timers" seem to have regarded cups and saucers, too, merely as luxuries.

### REMINDERS OF THE SOUTH

Visitors to Giant City State Park, in southern Illinois' Egypt," have compared it to coastal regions along the Gulf of Mexico, principally because trees and birds common to the gulf area abound there. Tulip, sweet gum, tupelo, and winged elm trees, almost unknown above the Mason-Dixon line, are found in considerable numbers. Species of birds common only in warmer climates, as well as southern types of squirrels and rabbits, thrive in this region. Added natural beauty is provided by a spur of the Ozark Mountains that extends into the park area.

### ONE PUPIL; ONE TEACHER

When the bell rang from the miners' district school house at East Galena for the first session in 1897, there was no rush of noisy children to take their seats before the teacher. A little fellow of six years was the solitary pupil. He seems to have been the only child of legal school age in the district. Residents had decided to maintain a school there in order to avoid the higher taxes of neighboring areas.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WELCOMING TAX COLLECTORS

About a century ago, one Illinois county showed delinquent taxes for one year of only \$5.28. Evidently this amount was considered excessive as the financial record of Brown County for 1840 was described as being only a "fair showing."

### TEACHERS AS INITIAL CARVERS

Even the teachers carved their names on the center pole of the old octagonal Illinois school house at Mount Carmel. The pole was in the center of the eight-sided, one-room school building, and, in addition to its use as an informal register of teachers and pupils, served as a support to the roof. Many of the persons whose names were carved on the pole became prominent in Illinois affairs. Records have been found of several other octagonal school houses built in Wabash County during the early days.

### SEVERAL WORDS TO THE WISE

Lads and lassies of Illinois who have younger brothers and sisters may well look to their laurels in view of the manner in which one Marion County "little" sister demonstrated her initiative many years ago. An 1885 news item from Centralia told how a would-be bride of Salem decided at the last moment not to marry, after her suitor had already procured a marriage license. The girl's younger sister offered herself, however, and was accepted. A change of name was made on the certificate and the couple married.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### THREE VILLAGES BECOME ONE

Iroquois, in the county of the same name, is the lone survivor of three Illinois villages which once occupied both banks of the Iroquois River at the site of the present village.

Although sparsely inhabited, they were platted as were several other nearby towns during the 1830's, in the hope that the county seat would be located at one of them. Montgomery, which achieved that ambition and became the first seat of Iroquois County, was on the south bank of the Iroquois River, on both sides of the historic Hubbard Trail. Iroquois was on the same side of the river, to the west of Montgomery. Concord, which is the present village of Iroquois, was on the north bank of the river, also on both sides of the Hubbard Trail, now Main Street in present-day Iroquois.

For a period all three villages were known as "Bunkum," and mail so addressed was delivered to the villages. However, the official post office name was Concord. In 1871 the "Big Four" railroad built a station in Concord and on its maps named the place Iroquois. In 1875 Concord was officially incorporated as Iroquois, and "Old Iroquois" and Montgomery gradually became "ghost towns."

### ONE COW AND TWO ENGINES

In 1894, Illinois residents were amazed to learn of the damage that resulted when a "double-header" train and a cow collided near Carlinville. A news dispatch stated that "engines and cars were thrown from the track and piled into a mass of iron and kindling wood." Loss was estimated to be \$12,000.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### THIRSTY AND DESPERATE ANIMALS

During the unusually severe winter of 1837, wild animals on the Illinois prairies were driven to desperation for adequate supplies of water. One day while cutting timber near a lake that was frozen over, a Macoupin County pioneer noticed a buck struggling toward a hole that he had cut in the ice to enable his horse to drink. Seizing an axe he advanced toward the animal and struck. The axe handle hit the buck's antlers and broke.

Then followed an exhausting battle as the pioneer held firmly to the antlers to avoid being gored. At length he broke away and found refuge in a tree, where he remained until the buck left.

### EDUCATION DURING CIVIL WAR

Although thousands of school teachers were among the quarter million men Illinois contributed to the national defense during the Civil War, great strides in education were made from 1861-1865.

Unprecedented sums of money were allotted by the state for educational purposes during the war years, according to an Illinois newspaper article of 1867. In the course of a two-year period 1,122 school buildings were constructed. Much of the cost was met by voluntary taxation.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### ILLINOIS GIRLS AS HOME-MAKERS

In Illinois, statistics refute the popular opinion that the home-making, home-loving girls of the past are dwindling in number. Vocational home-making classes attracted only 311 students in twenty schools when the work was offered under State supervision in 1918. At present, however, 21,000 persons in 281 schools are enrolled. Nearly a quarter of a million students have been trained since the classes started.

### MORE THAN ONE FLOOD

Not one flood, but three swept along Illinois waters courses to swell the recent Ohio River flood. U. S. Geological Survey engineers have pointed out that although streams in Illinois did not rise as far as they sometimes have, perhaps more water was discharged from them than in any other flood of which there is record.

The first flood rose on January 16, the next on January 22, and the third on February 1, 1937. They kept Illinois streams swollen while the crest of the main flood was passing down the Ohio River.

### FASHION, DUST, AND TEARS

Fashion dictates of the gay nineties received an unlooked for jolt in 1894 when the manager of an Illinois telephone company objected to the long skirts of the switchboard operators. He declared that dust stirred up by them interfered with clear connections by clogging terminals. Operators were ordered to wear dresses that cleared the floor by three inches. Indignation and copious tears followed, but the order stood.



### EARLY ILLINOIS CRICKET GAME

A cricket match seems to have been the first athletic contest held within the state of Illinois. A record of this event has been found in Wood's English Prairie, a part of "Early Western Travels," edited by Thwaites: "On the second of October (1820) there was a game of cricket played at Wanborough by the young men of the settlement; this they called keeping Catherine Hill fair, many of the players being from the neighborhood of Godalming and Guilford, (England.)"

Wanborough was an early settlement, which is thought to have been not far from Shawneetown, and Catherine Hill fair is well known to all persons acquainted with the vicinity of Guilford, Surrey.

### ROYAL WELCOME FOR A PRINCE

A visit by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, eldest son of Queen Victoria, to Livingston County in 1860 was noted in connection with the visit of the English royal family to Canada and the United States in 1939.

The nineteen-year-old Prince, en route from Chicago to St. Louis, stopped in Dwight Township for a few days hunting, staying at Renfrew Lodge, where special furniture had been installed. He was the guest of honor at a reception attended by the townspeople on the evening of his arrival. The following day he and his retinue worshipped at the Presbyterian Church, to which, much pleased with the services, the Prince made a donation. During one excursion, the Prince and his party bagged over 200 quail and wild chickens.





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## S t o r i e s   f r o m   I l l i n o i s   H i s t o r y

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### ALL DAY CHURCH SERVICE

Church services that began at 10 o'clock in the morning and lasted until 5 o'clock in the evening were offered to the early settlers of many Illinois communities. Preaching in the log cabins was open to members of all denominations, and ministers often joined to lead the day-long meetings.

An account of such a service, held in Montgomery County in 1822, states that the preacher, described as "big and burly," read the first two lines of a hymn and then led the worshippers in singing them. After the sermon and a second hymn, it was announced that after a short recess, another pastor would continue the service. During the noon recess the children rushed to the fireplace with sticks or pieces of clapboard and rolled out the eggs they had brought for lunch.

In the meantime, the men went to the water bucket which stood in the back corner of the room. The procedure there was described as "being rather slow as only one dipper was provided.

### SPEAKING OF "TURTLEPHOBIA"

An account of an Illinois lad who suffered from "turtle-phobia," contracted from a turtle bite, appeared in an early Bureau County news dispatch. The symptoms described by the early report sound like the common ones of rabies, and the editor seems to have coined his own term when he called the ailment "turtlephobia."



### DESCRIBING AN EXPLANATION

When four acres of land were condemned in 1878 for an addition to the State House grounds at Springfield, the owners of the property refused to accept the treasury warrants of compensation for the land, stating that they did not wish to sell. According to the Springfield Register of June 1878, the Honorable Ninian W. Edwards prepared a paper "as long as the Revised Statutes of 1874, as complicated as the Dog law, and as mysterious as the State Revenue law," explaining the matter to "anybody who wants to argue with him about it." It seems that the warrants could not be drawn until the attorney general filed an opinion that they were "proper and legal."

### RIVERS AND BOUNDARY LINES

Of the 102 counties in Illinois, boundary lines of Pulaski are the most irregular because of the circuitous courses of the Ohio and Cache rivers. One mile north of the southernmost tip, it is two miles wide. Three miles north it is eight miles wide; five miles north it is nine miles; eleven miles north it reaches its greatest width of seventeen miles; fifteen miles north it has narrowed to fifteen miles and at the northern boundary there are only ten miles between the east and west county lines.

The longest distance between the northern and southern boundaries is eighteen miles and the shortest distance is on the eastern boundary where the Ohio River forms an arc. At this point Pulaski County is only five miles long.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WASHINGTON IRVING, LANDOWNER

Washington Irving figures as an Illinois landowner in a newspaper item printed by the Quincy Herald, July 25, 1893.

"It is not generally known," the writer states, "that Washington Irving, author of Rip Van Winkle and other charming bits of fiction, is on the Adams County records as having at one time been a real estate owner in Quincy. It is a fact, nevertheless, that the title of the property on which Koenig and Luhr's carriage factory stands at one time belonged to him."

The account points out that the property was purchased by the famous author for a faithful employee, to whom it was later transferred.

### GOLD, LAND, AND EDUCATION

An account of a dowry of \$150 in gold and a quarter section of land provided a century ago by an Indian chief in Illinois for his 150-pound daughter, enlivens a chapter in the biographical record of a pioneer in the southern part of the state.

One stipulation that had to be reckoned with by aspirants for the girl's affections blocked all applicants. It seems that the warrior had somehow been impressed by the idea of education, and so he included in his terms the provision that the young man who sought to win the girl and the dowry must be educated.

According to the account, not one of the applicants could meet the intellectual qualification. No mention is made of the kind of intelligence test that was given.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### THREE-WHACK WATCHMEN

In 1877, an innovation to constabulary duties in an Illinois city annoyed light sleepers and probably brought rejoicing to night-time marauders. Watchmen in the thriving city of Cairo were then required to strike three resounding blows on lamp posts at intervals of ten minutes during the hours of darkness.

The Cairo Bulletin was not impressed by the order as furthering the interests of public safety, for it observed that thieves would be made aware of policemen's whereabouts, and "arrests will be less frequent."

Apprehensive residents, it is said, found two questionable advantages in the custom. It gave them assurance that officers were active in their pursuit of law and order, and it kept the citizenry in a state of semi-wakefulness. In time, the practice was discontinued.

### SHEEP, WOLVES, AND TROUBLE

Sheep raisers in Illinois in the early days were greatly troubled by wolves, and numerous contemporary references tell of the destruction once caused by them. In January, 1871, a news dispatch from Greene County stated that large numbers of wolves had been killing sheep in the western part of the county and that "they must either be exterminated or sheep raising be abandoned in that section." In February of the following year an Illinois newspaper reported: "Wolves are making themselves troublesome in Rodner and Kickapoo townships, Peoria County, carrying away sheep, shoats, etc." Their howling could be heard as far distant as Peoria.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MORE HONOR THAN MONEY

In 1872 an Illinois county prosecutor may have enjoyed the honor that went with his profession, but he could not have purchased many luxuries from his fees. In that year the state legislature passed a law providing that every county in the State must elect its own prosecuting attorney. The salary was to be \$400 a year.

### MINERAL LAND FOR A SONG

Valuable mineral lands in Illinois were once practically given away by the government. An item in the Chicago Daily Journal in 1847 stated that by proclamation of the President a sale of government lands would be held at Dixon the following April. The writer stated that the minimum price of \$1.25 an acre was all that land in the famous Galena lead district would bring.

### DISCOVERING MORE FOLKS

Government census takers in 1880 counted only 31,750 citizens of Peoria -- a number felt by city authorities to be inaccurate. According to a newspaper item the citizens appointed special canvassers, who made a recount and found 3,436 additional members of the community.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### PLANTS OF PIONEER ILLINOIS

An early Illinois physician's interest in the medicinal qualities of herbs is believed to have led directly to the first serious effort to make a comprehensive catalogue of the State's plants. In 1833, Dr. Samuel B. Mead of Augusta, Hancock County, began to collect specimens for his herbarium, which he hoped would eventually include examples of every plant growing within the state. He eagerly sought correspondents to send him good specimens, in return for which he agreed to give other plants growing in the vicinity of his home.

Under the title, "Catalogue of Plants, growing spontaneously in the State of Illinois, the principal part near Augusta, Hancock County," the Prairie Farmer in its issues from January to April, 1846, printed Mead's findings. The first part of the record included detailed explanations of the abbreviations and typographical devices used throughout the catalogue.

In 1880, Knox College at Galesburg secured Dr. Mead's collections and writings, which he had prepared during nearly fifty years of study. They are considered to be invaluable records of plant life in the early period of the state's history.

### GUARDING AGAINST FIRE

Probably as a result of the Chicago fire of 1871 a law was passed in Bloomington in January, 1872, regulating the sale of kerosene. An account of the time states that the law prohibited merchants within the city limits from keeping more than three barrels of oil on hand at one time. Another provision of the ordinance forbade the drawing of oil by any light other than daylight.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MUSIC IN THE AIR

In 1885--About ten years after the first successful use of the telephone--a "hook-up" of telephone lines in northern Illinois made "the common air blossom with music." According to a contemporary account of the event in the Momence Reporter, the Momence Cornet Band went to the local telephone office and played several selections before an open switchboard connected with neighboring cities and villages.

Nine stations, including Kankakee, Grant Park, St. Anne, Manteno, Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, and Chicago, listened in to the concert, and the "broadcast" was heard over several private wires. "When all of these connections were made," said the Reporter, "it was interesting to listen to the different remarks coming from all the various points which could be distinctly heard. There was a complete pandemonium of voices and all mingled together to that extent that it was impossible for any to talk to anyone else in particular. Many got impatient, and such remarks as 'keep still, can't you, keep still?' etc., were common."

### SLOW MOTION TRAVEL

Although cross-country travel in ox-drawn carts or Conestoga wagons was greatly lessened by the expansion of railroads from 1850 to 1870, for a number of years the covered wagon continued to be used as a means of transportation. By the 1890's however, ox-drawn conveyances were enough of a rarity in Illinois to occasion newspaper comment. A dispatch from Olney, Richmond County, dated May 15, 1891, stated, "An ox team passed through Olney Friday, bound for Kansas. At the rate they were traveling they will arrive at their destination about Christmas."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### LEISURE TIME ADVICE

Half a century ago, unemployed citizens of Illinois were told by a newspaper writer what to do with their leisure time. The following advice appeared in the Marion Leader of July 10, 1890:

"A good way for laborers and others to make dull times duller is to sit around and cuss and complain about the way things are going. Instead of sitting and waiting for something to turn up, all hands should take hold and turn something up. July is generally a dull month so far as employment in town is concerned, made so because all enterprise is devoted to harvesting and attending the crops. It is a good time for the working man to spend a few days improving his home and visiting his family."

### PLEASE KEEP OFF THE GRASS

Trains moving within city limits at six to twelve miles an hour, or crossing a public square, gave concern to Illinois residents of sixty years ago. A newspaper item tells of a suit filed by the city of Joliet in 1872 to restrain a railroad "from running their locomotives and cars across the public square."

Another journal reports a bill introduced by a state legislator to permit railroads to increase their speed from six to twelve miles an hour through cities and towns. Commenting on this proposal, a writer of the time wondered if the representative wished "to destroy his constituents."





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### ELYSIUM DAYS IN ILLINOIS

The historic region bordering the Mississippi River on the Illinois side from the mouth of the Missouri to the former outlet of the Kaskaskia was known to the early settlers as "The American Bottom." According to the Centennial History of Illinois, this strip of lowland was the home of a tribe of mound builders who, it is believed, represented the highest cultural development among the aboriginal inhabitants of Illinois.

Charmed by the almost tropical beauty and fertility of the place, the French established there in the early 1700's the first permanent white settlements in the old Illinois country, notably Cahokia and Kaskaskia, chief centers of influence in Illinois for more than 100 years. One writer called it "the Elysium of America," and described it as being unexcelled for crop production.

### AMONG THOSE MISSING

A law of Illinois passed in 1871 required that when additional land was secured for capitol grounds, a bond must be signed by 200 responsible persons, guaranteeing that the ground was free of cost to the state. As a result, a somewhat awkward situation arose in 1877 at Springfield when it was found that of signers of such a bond eighteen were dead, forty-eight were bankrupt, and seventeen had moved from the state.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### PIONEER ILLINOIS SHEEP BREEDER

One of the very early farmers of Illinois, George Flower, of Edwards County, became widely known as a successful grower of sheep. It is related that he brought with him from England for breeding purposes "six of the finest animals of the wool growing species ever imported into this country."

In 1841, he passed on valuable information to other sheep men by means of a pamphlet.

Since wolves were a great scourge to shepherds in those early days, Flower emphasized the necessity of constant vigilance against their attacks and advocated the building of wolf-proof fences. "They are very sly animals," he wrote, "and I have known one, protected by a hazel bush, to enter a flock while the keeper was with it, and kill quite a number of sheep before he could be got out. The flock frequently does not seem to apprehend the wolf, or flee from him; and he will do his work without causing any commotion among them."

### MANY TOO MANY SNAKES

Perhaps the strangest cause for the delay of a train in the history of Illinois railroading occurred in 1881 when hundreds, if not thousands, of snakes blocked the track. According to a newspaper account of the time, the roadbed between Sterling and Rock Island literally swarmed with the reptiles after a flood in the adjacent lowlands. The engineer thought that the locomotive could clear them from the right of way, but he quickly found out that too many snakes were as effective as a landslide in blocking a train.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### SOURCE OF ILLINOIS RIVER

On a summer day in 1878 an argument arose in a small Illinois community over the source of the Illinois River, "which sweeps past our town." According to historical research workers, the editor of the Lacon Home Journal, who was present at the discussion, took pains to look up the matter and published his findings.

"The Illinois," he wrote, "is formed by the union of the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers at Dresden. . . . The Des Plaines, or Aux Plains, the Indian appellation of which is She-shik-mah-o, rises in southwest Wisconsin, and is about 150 miles long. The Kankakee rises in northern Indiana. . . . At Ottawa the Fox empties into the Illinois, which further along receives the Vermilion, the Spoon, Mackinaw and the Sangamon."

Having thus settled the question, the editor then supplied his readers with some miscellaneous geographical and historical data about the Illinois, explaining that although most of his readers knew these facts, "others will be glad to have their memory refreshed."

### ONE NAME OUT OF THREE

When it came time in the development of Illinois to name the county seat of Warren County, three names were proposed. One early settler, who had migrated from Monmouth, New Jersey, suggested Monmouth, another recommended Isabella, and a third wanted Kosciusko. The decision narrowed down to Kosciusko and Monmouth. Then, the old settlers decided that Kosciusko was too hard to pronounce and spell, and so the place was named Monmouth.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### AN EARLY ILLINOIS VISITOR

In 1818, Thomas Hulme, a friend of William Cobbett, the famous British political writer and editor, traveled through the "western countries" of the United States as far as Morris Birkbeck's settlement at English Prairie in Illinois, near the junction of the Wabash and Little Wabash rivers. A description of Birkbeck's settlement is given in Hulme's Journal, a document considered by many students of history to be one of the exceptionally lively and valuable memoirs of pioneer days.

Hulme observed the "lofty woods" surrounding the prairies, and said that they "put me in mind of immense noblemen's parks in England." Birkbeck had extensive holdings, which he hoped to "re-sell again in lots to any of his friends, they taking as much of it and wherever they choose (provided it be no more than they can cultivate) ."

He found Birkbeck living in a cabin, "the building of which cost only twenty dollars," but the famous pioneer intended to build a large house and to keep the cabin for a mere "appurtenance." Hulme liked "this plan of keeping the old log house; it reminds the grand children and their children's of what their ancestor has done for their sake." Hulme further noted that Birkbeck had made a good garden, and that he had to journey to New Harmony, Indiana, twenty miles away, for supplies.

### BLACK PARTRIDGES FROM CALCUTTA

An attempt to naturalize exotic wild fowl in Illinois was made in 1891 by a resident of Macomb, McDonough County. Five brace of India black partridge were secured through the American consul at Calcutta and imported to Illinois. The birds were said to be the first of the Indian varieties of partridge to be brought to America.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### SAILING IN A WAGON BOX

A tornado that struck northeastern Illinois the night of October 29, 1875, played some exceptionally strange and terrifying tricks in and around Mokena, in Kankakee County. An account in the Mokena Reporter tells of a farmer who was driving in a lumber wagon when the storm struck. The wagon box, with the farmer in it, sailed over a fence and landed in a field upside down. After the farmer crawled out and found his horses by the glare of lightning flashes, he was amazed to see that the collar on one of them had been turned completely around by the wind. Presumably the rest of the harness had been torn off by the blast.

### SPARE THE ROD; SAVE THE CHILD

In the 1890s, humanitarians in Illinois were demanding that an end be put to physical punishment of school children in the state. The East St. Louis Journal of April 29, 1891, stated editorially, "Corporal punishment in the public schools ought to be abolished, and at once. The Journal has no particular reference to East St. Louis, but to the schools in general throughout the state. The lash is a relic of barbarism."

### METEORITE OVER ILLINOIS

"With such a shock as to jar the ground like an earthquake on a small scale, and with a noise like heavy thunder," a meteorite was described as striking Illinois near Sycamore, in De Kalb County, in the winter of 1861.

According to the Belvidere Standard the object was believed to weigh about a ton and to contain considerable iron. The earth for some distance around was "strewn with a substance like ashes or cinders." Several persons living 18 or 20 miles away heard the impact.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WOODLANDS OF EDGAR COUNTY

In a tract of Illinois land comprising about two fifths of Edgar County, a remarkably large number of different kinds of trees have long been thriving. Here, it is reported, may be seen all varieties of ash, beech, black haw, cottonwood, red and white elm, hickory, honey locust, mulberry, poplar, sassafras, sycamore, and walnut that grow in this region. Less numerous are birch, crab apple, dogwood, ironwood, paw paw, and wild plum.

Not content with this contribution on a relatively small area of land, nature also provides, where the woodlands meet the prairie, an abundance of blackberries, dewberries, and strawberries.

Edgar County is situated on the eastern border of the state, approximately 160 miles south of Chicago. It is about 27 miles in length and 24 miles in width. The surface of the county varies from flat to rolling, but in the southeastern part along Sugar Creek and its branches, in the timbered section, it is rather hilly.

### FAREWELL TO WOODEN SIDEWALKS

Although some of even the larger communities of Illinois retained wooden sidewalks well into the present century, Bloomington was proudly planning to substitute other material for them as early as 1880. According to research workers many of Bloomington residents were having brick walks laid in front of their houses, and it was predicted that in a few years no wooden sidewalks would remain.



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S t o r i e s f r o m I l l i n o i s H i s t o r y

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P A R T T H R E E

F R O M F I S H T O W I S D O M



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### FISH STORY FROM THE CLOUDS

On May 17, 1896, an unusual storm broke over a portion of Macon County. The Quincy Daily Journal, reporting the phenomenon, described it thus: "During a heavy hail and rain storm yesterday hundreds of small fish fell in the streets from the clouds. They are small perch, from one-half to three inches long."

### FISH, MORE OR LESS

Of the 150 species of fish in Illinois waters, 128 varieties are found in the Illinois River basin. Lakes and streams of Fulton and Mason counties yield nearly all these species.

Prior to 1900, the Illinois River had the reputation of being one of the most productive streams for fish in the country. At least 70 per cent of all the fish taken from the streams of the state came from it. Statistics published at the beginning of the century show that approximately fourteen and a half million pounds of fish were shipped from Illinois River ports each year.

### "DONT'S" WITH PENALTIES

Unrestrained language was likely to be costly for early Illinois residents, particularly if the lapse occurred on the Sabbath. The state's first legislators provided a fine as high as \$50 for Sunday cursing. On week days such expressions were not so expensive it is said.

An early Chicago ordinance prohibited ladies from wearing hats in the theater. Offenders were subject to a fine, and theater managers who permitted the practice suffered even greater penalties than did the owner of the hat.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MEMORIES OF PAST WARS

A notable Illinois military record is associated with the history of Stark County, John Stark, for whom the county was named, fought in the French and Indian War, 1763, was a colonel at Bunker Hill and later in the War of the Revolution became a brigadier general. The area that bears his name now covers 290 square miles. Toulon is the seat of government.

### A VOICE IN THE DARK

Illinois has its share of "haunted house" stories but accounts of haunted bridges are rare. At Henry, residents still tell of a nearby bridge that townsfolk avoided for many years.

A citizen of Henry coming home one night in a somewhat merry but sleepy mood, it is related, stopped to rest on the river bank underneath the bridge over Cow Creek. About midnight a party of young people paused nearby to chat. The talk turned to ghost stories. After one especially gruesome tale, the lone citizen shouted, "It's all imagination!"

The terrified youths, panic stricken, ran home and the next day spread the word that the bridge was haunted. Their story was so convincing, it is said, that for years some townspeople would go miles out of their way to avoid crossing the bridge at night.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### CANDIDATES' COFFIN

Pioneers of Illinois did not bother much about formalities in their voting at least, not so far as ballot boxes were concerned. In Adams County, the first ballot box is said to have been a tin tea pot, used in the presidential election of 1824. The first ballot box in Marion County has been described as being about the size of an ordinary cigar box. On it the pioneers cheerfully inscribed in ink, "Candidates' Coffin."

### SOLID BASEMENT FOR ILLINOIS

Illinois, the home of approximately eight million people, has a basement of red granite. The forces of nature began to build it some 600,000,000 years ago.

Reports show the Paleozoic era was chiefly responsible for the underground rock formation in Illinois and adjacent states. During this time, the continents were first inundated by marine waters and later buried under coal bogs. As the third of the five great geologic eras, the Paleozoic is said to have extended over approximately 400,000,000 years. The eras which followed -- the Mesozoic and Cenozoic -- lasted, scientists say, 150,000,000 and 50,000,000 years, respectively.

The basement structure of Illinois is known to average depths of nearly 4,000 feet. In the northern part of the state, near Amboy, a well that was drilled several years ago reached a total depth of 3,772 feet and struck pre-Paleozoic red granite at a level of 3,760 feet.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### LURE OF SCENIC BLUFFS

High limestone bluffs flanking the Illinois River as it winds through Greene County rank among the popular scenic attractions of the state. The bluffs, estimated to be at least 7,000,000 years old, rise from 100 to 200 feet in height and extend for some 25 miles from the Scott County line southward to Macoupin Creek.

Although some are crowned by tree and other plant growths, most of them have sand crests. Years ago, these mounds were the favorite burial grounds of Indian tribes. Many implements, such as stone hatchets, axes, pipes, knives, and arrow-heads, have been unearthed here.

### WHEAT, AND MORE WHEAT

Wheat production in Illinois would have lagged considerably but for the initiative and foresight of one of its pioneers, an Ohio farmer, Edward Talbott, who came to Cumberland County about 1842 and later was county sheriff. He believed Illinois soil was especially adaptable to wheat growing and was willing to invest money to prove his contention.

By canal boat and over wagon trail, Talbott brought mill machinery from Warren, Ohio, to Cumberland Mills, and through his efforts and the influence of the mill, the section rapidly became an outstanding area of the state in wheat production.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### TWO TOWNS ON ONE SITE

Illinois historians, who have written accounts of the dramatic rise and decline of many communities throughout the state that are now only "ghost towns," have learned of a site on which, not one, but two towns played brief roles and then vanished. A century-old cemetery at the meeting of the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers in Channahon Township, Will County, alone marks the point where homes and industries once flourished.

Kankakee City, the first settlement, embraced 2,000 acres and came into existence during the land boom of the 1830's. However, during the panic of 1837, its 70 families began to seek homes elsewhere.

During the 1870's sandstone was discovered in the region, and with the need for building materials following the great fire in Chicago, quarries called for workers and the town of Shermanville rose on the ruins of Kankakee City. But when demand ceased, Shermanville, like its predecessor, became a part of the record of Illinois "ghost towns."

### JUST ONE NAME AFTER ANOTHER

In 1868, proud Illinois parents of a ten pound boy at Ottawa placed an advertisement in a local newspaper in search of a good name for the lad. Fellow residents may have been too busy during the period of reconstruction following the Civil War to give much time to the problem, for none of the suggestions seems to have been satisfactory. A history book gave the answer. After studying it a while, the parents sent a news item to the same paper, announcing that the little fellow's surnames would be Grant Sherman Sheridan Rosencranz Hooker Burnside Fremont Stanton Lincoln Schuyler Golfax Pusey.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### BUSY DAYS FOR CORN-HUSKERS

Present day corn-husking experts, who use improved methods to speed their efforts, would find "old timers" worthy competitors.

A reporter for the Chicago Times of January 3, 1881, wrote: "One corn-husker in Fulton County has figured up a total of four thousand two hundred and twenty bushels in fifty two days, making an average of a little more than eighty-one bushels per day. The corn averaged forty-seven bushels per acre." In one day he husked 114 bushels. The smallest yield for the same time was 51 bushels.

The 1938 Illinois corn-husking record stands at 32.76 bushels in one hour and a half, according to the Illinois Agricultural Association.

### LOG SCHOOL HOUSES IN ILLINOIS

In 1850 Illinois had 10,238 public school buildings, most of them small one-room structures, and many of log construction. In 1871, out of a total of 11,011 school buildings, 1,089 were log school houses. That year 20,181 school teachers were employed.

### GAELIC FOLK IN ILLINOIS

A small group of Gaelic-speaking Scottish Highlanders settled in Illinois in the 1860's. For several years the highlanders did not have a pastor for their church at Elmira, as most of the congregation, which numbered about one hundred, could understand but little English. At length the services of a Gaelic-speaking Highlander and preacher were obtained.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MARGARET FULLER ISLAND

A heavily wooded Illinois island of three acres in Rock River, near Oregon, in Ogle County, is named Margaret Fuller Island in honor of the New England author and lecturer, Margaret Fuller, 1810-1850. In July, 1843, Miss Fuller, who for many years contributed literary criticisms and special articles to Horace Greeley's New York Tribune, visited Oregon, then an outlying pioneer settlement. Moved by the beauty of the country, she described it in enthusiastic terms.

On July 4, it is related, she picnicked on the bluff, Eagle Rock, which overlooks Rock River, and inspired by the beauty of the scenery wrote the poem, "Ganymede to His Eagle." The name was drawn from the youth in classical mythology who was transformed into an eagle and taken by Jove to Mount Olympus to be cup bearer for the gods. She applied the name to the spring that flows from the foot of Eagle Rock, and it is still called Ganymede Spring.

### TOO MANY STRAY ANIMALS

Residents of at least one early Illinois community were called upon to incorporate as a town primarily to curb roving domestic animals threatening its safety and order. An historical account of Carlyle, Clinton County, tells of a notice proposing incorporation that was posted in 1837 by a citizen who complained of "divers nuisances" in the form of dogs and other quadrupeds. The meeting was scheduled for the school house and all "persons interested" were asked to attend.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### "LABOR ITSELF IS A PLEASURE"

Among newspaper editors who have found disarming ways to present delinquent subscribers with warnings is one early Illinois editor who set forth his message in a news item, in 1878:

"The Mattoon Journal gets down near the truth when it says that 'the farmers lose nearly as much money every year from hog cholera as newspapermen do by delinquent subscribers.'"

In 1880, an item in the Chicago Times, pointed out that the editor of the Galesburg Free Press, finding a number of readers neglected to pay for their subscriptions, "concluded that they had been misled by the word free." Accordingly, the article went on to state, he changed the name to the Galesburg Press.

"He says with delightful naivete," the article continued, "that he does not see that the change has had much effect upon his list."

### QUICK CHANCE OF COUNTY NAME

In 1840, Dane County, Illinois, was renamed Christian County. It had been established as Dane County in 1839 to honor Congressman Nathan Dane, author of the famous "Northwestern Ordinance."

However, Nathan Dane was an ardent Federalist, a party widely opposed in Illinois at the time. The new name was selected because many of the inhabitants were from Christian County, Kentucky.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### WOODMAN, SPARE THAT TREE!

In 1871, the seriousness of the rapid depletion of Illinois timberlands was realized, and farmers were advised to turn their attention to raising trees.

Two bills on the subject were then being considered by the Illinois legislature. One proposed to exempt from taxation all land set apart for tree culture; the other offered a bounty of half a cent for every tree over six feet high except those raised for sales by nurserymen.

### HUNTING WITH A "WAMMUS"

The well-dressed hunter on Illinois during the 1850's could not call his wardrobe complete unless it contained a "wammus." This garment resembled a short top coat, generous in width. Around the inside was sewn a great pocket for carrying small game. One historian observed that some pioneers found it a convenient place to conceal small quantities of food stuff, such as fruit and vegetables, happily found in the course of nocturnal ramblings.

### GETTING A BOOST FROM OIL

Back in 1897, a unique oil strike in Illinois at Varna, Marshall County, struck terror to the citizens. A newspaper writer reported that "water from the town well has tasted of oil for some time and it was thought that some one had thrown kerosene into it." When a resident who was determined to clean out the well lowered a lantern into it, a gas explosion blew the platform and pump from their foundations and shook the whole place.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### ALONG APPLE RIVER CANYON

Robber's Den, Miner's Gulch, Tower Rock, and Neptune's Spring are points of special interest to the hundreds of tourists and campers who follow the foot trails in Apple River Canyon State Park, 600 acre tract of northwestern Illinois.

Limestone cliffs, rising from 60 to 250 feet, form a gorge five miles long through which runs the narrow channel of the clear Apple River. Wolf, fox, mink, and raccoon live safely in the park, and the river is well stocked with small-mouthed bass. The state maintains rigid supervision for the protection of game.

In 1838 a village called Millville flourished in the center of the canyon, and was a stop on the Galena-Chicago stage-coach line. When the Black Hawk War threatened the pioneers in the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin country, settlers of Millville were forced to flee from their homes.

### WHEN A HOBO WAS A HERO

In 1891, a hobo became an Illinois hero by averting a serious train accident. Walking along the tracks toward Central City, he discovered a broken rail. Something of a "rail-road man" himself, he hurried to report the matter. A section gang rushed toward the break and reached the scene in time to stop a limited train. The transient sauntered away, but was soon overtaken, and escorted to Champaign where he was entertained as a hero.



### GETTING ALONG WITHOUT MONEY

"Labor subscriptions" built an early Illinois seminary when funds could not be secured. Residents of Henry County, an early historian relates, decided that a higher institution of learning was urgently needed at Geneseo. Men of the community gladly contributed their services, and completed the structure "without money and without price."

### OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Many of the birds common in Illinois years ago have either disappeared entirely or else are greatly diminished in number.

On a summer day in 1871, Robert Ridgeway, famous ornithologist of Richland County, observed 145 species of native and migratory birds in the prairies and woods west of Olney, according to an authority. Among these were Baltimore orioles, warbling and red-eyed vireos, mocking birds, brown thrashers, yellow-breasted chats, field sparrows, chewinks, cardinals, Bob Whites, white-eyed vireos, Bell's vireos, vermilion tanagers, blue jays, red-headed woodpeckers, Dick Cissels, Henlow's buntings, yellow-winged sparrows, prairie larks, meadow larks, swallow-tailed kites, and ravens.

Other writers of the period noted the abundance of wild fowl in the rice fields along the Illinois River, and tell of seeing cranes, gallinules, coots, wood duck, mallards, teals, snipes, bitterns, blue herons, snowy egrets, mud hens, blue-bills, springtails, greenwings, brants, sandhill cranes, white swans, white pelicans, wild geese, and hooded mergansers.



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## S t o r i e s f r o m I l l i n o i s H i s t o r y

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### LOST RIVER CARGOES

Illinois river boatmen learned their picturesque profession partly in boyhood by hunting for articles of merchandise lost from sunken craft.

Notwithstanding the amazing skill of the boatmen, who knew every shoal and eddy of the rivers and streams, boats were often swept onto rocks or crowded to the shore. If such misfortune befell a craft, it would likely sink and its cargo be scattered for miles along the river channel. At first news of disaster, young boys ran to the river front to search for lost articles. In so doing they learned the importance and hazards of river currents and thus prepared themselves for the work of boatmen.

### MAGIC AND GADGETS

Man's age old quest for ways to avoid or to assuage suffering prompted early Illinois residents in some instances to use many devices in the interests of health.

Some persons confidently believed that a shovelful of hot coals waved over the head of a patient suffering from erysipelas would effect a cure, in a magical manner. Onions carried in a pocket were thought to be potent enough to stagger nearly any ordinary variety of ache or pain. Horse chestnuts or cedar knots were considered in some quarters to be just as good.

In place of any of these accessories, some persons strung gum camphor around the neck or wore rings made from a potato. Likewise copper bands were placed about the neck, wrist, or ankle for the purpose, it seems, of either charming the agents of good health or making its enemies very dizzy.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### GREAT NAMES FOR GREAT COUNTIES

Many Illinois counties are named for men who fought for American Independence. Indeed, nearly one in every three counties honors a leader in the Revolutionary War.

Familiar names among the State's 102 counties are Henry, Jefferson, and Washington, but there are the many less familiar names of persons who played significant roles in the early struggle. Three counties are named for distinguished foreigners who fought the British side by side with the colonists. General La Fayette of France, Casimir Pulaski, a Pole, and Baron De Kalb, born in Germany but a soldier in French armies for many years. La Fayette is commemorated in the name of Fayette County. The article "La" was dropped from the name long ago in popular usage. De Kalb was given the rank of major-general and was killed in the battle of Camden. Pulaski, who was exiled from Poland for assisting his father in a revolt against the king, was killed in the attack on Savannah while leading a cavalry charge.

Mrs. John Edgar really deserves the credit for Edgar County's name, it is claimed, for it was she who persuaded her husband, General John Edgar, a British army officer, to join the forces of the rebelling colonists.

Other counties are named for General Francis Marion, General Philip Schuyler, Governor Isaac Shelby, Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, Benjamin Franklin, General Nathaniel Greene, Alexander Hamilton, John Hancock, Richard Henry Lee, John Marshall, General Hugh Mercer, James Monroe, General Israel Putnam, General John Stark, General Anthony Wayne, General Daniel Morgan, Edmund Randolph, General Arthur St. Clair, General Joseph Warren, Nathaniel Macon, General Richard Montgomery, Sergeant William Jasper, General Moultrie, General Henry Knox, and Charles Carroll.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### HURRY CALL FOR UMBRELLAS

During one Illinois rainstorm recorded at La Harpe, Hancock County, on June 10, 1905, over ten inches of rain fell to set a record. The severity of the storm may be realized when it is known that the average mean actual rainfall in the whole State is only 37.4 inches, according to statistics collected at 142 stations from 1881 to 1910.

### PRAIRIE FIRES RAGING

Prairie fires menaced early settlers in Illinois as well as pioneers in states farther west. Historians point out that one of the most effective methods of halting these conflagrations was to plow around the farms and sometimes even entire towns. Often a space two to ten furrows wide was hastily plowed up to block the advancing fires, or "back fires" were started to burn areas in the path of the flames. Notwithstanding this and other precautions, a number of early Illinois settlements were wiped out by flames that reached across woodland and prairie to jump the gaps of freshly plowed land.

### HOISTING THE STARS AND STRIPES

For over a half a century, beginning with 1839, preparations for a widely known Illinois Independence Day celebration held in Macoupin County featured the placing of the "liberty poles."

On the day preceding Fourth of July, a committee would select a slender, tall tree, cut it down, and strip it of bark and branches. The pole would then be taken to the site of the festivities and firmly implanted in the ground between heavy posts. On the day of the celebration, the largest flag obtainable was hoisted to the top.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

Rough and ready proposals of marriage were not uncommon in the early days of Illinois. An historian of Effingham County recounts the story of an early settler who, when his wife died, set out to find another. Arriving at the home of one eligible lady he called her out and after looking her over as she stood in the doorway he announced that she did not suit him. He then rode on to the home of a widow, with whom he was suitably impressed, for he commanded her to go with him at once to the magistrate and be married. At first she refused because he spoke roughly to her, but she relented and the ceremony was performed.

### INDIANS, GRAMMAR, AND PREACHING

Early accounts show that Illinois Indians were very quick to learn the English language. An historian of McHenry County tells of two squaws who were better educated than some of the backwoods preachers. On one occasion during a long sermon, the women were seen to amuse themselves by making notes of the grammatical blunders made by the itinerant evangelist.

### GASOLINE AND LARGE CROPS

Illinois pioneers of a century ago were happy if they could grow enough crops to provide for their own needs, and occasionally for limited market demands. Today field workers for the State's Division of Agricultural Statistics measure crop frontages while riding in automobiles. A crop meter is attached to the speedometer drive. By retracing routes year after year, an annual acreage comparison is obtained for each important crop. The widespread paved road system of the State is of much aid in metering the acreage change.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### NEW TREES FOR OLD

Timber, which was once a source of considerable revenue in one Illinois county, may again be a valuable product if a re-forestation experiment, now being carried on, is successful. A tract of 15,000 acres, lying between Fountain Bluff and Big Muddy River in Jackson County, is now being allowed to revert to its natural state, and under systematic forestry management, it is believed, will, in the course of some years, be profitable.

The experiment is being conducted in an area in which efforts have been made to drain the land by dredging. This work, however, has failed because of the heavy quality of the soil. If the experiment develops well, the timber will be a considerable addition to the list of local resources. Little marketable timber is now left in the county, as most of the wooded areas have been cut over several times.

### ONE NAME TOO MANY

For a time, years ago, an Illinois town had two names. About 1904, Craig, in Perry County, was re-named Winkle, after the new mine owner, Joseph Winkle, who purchased a large tract of land, began sinking a coal mine. Later, twenty small houses were erected for the mine workers. Until then "Craig" had only three or four houses.

Because of another station in the State with a name similarly spelled, the Post Office refused to change the station from "Craig" to "Winkle." Mail meant for "Winkle" had to be addressed to "Craig." The dilemma of the two-name community continued until decline of the town brought about the discontinuance of the local postal station.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### BAKING BEFORE MUSIC-MAKING

When musical harmony got in the way of gastronomy back in the 1870's, the art of good eating won the day in Illinois. A newspaper item of 1874 tells of fourteen practical citizens of Quincy, who signed a pledge not to allow their daughters to study music until the girls had learned to bake bread.

### COUNTING FROM ONE TO TEN

If Delaware Indians, who once included northern Illinois land among their hunting grounds, were asked to count from one to ten, what they said would sound like this: cota, nitia, naka, nawai, palini, kotash, nishkosh, kosh, pashoon, telon.

This numerical system was recorded over 65 years ago by an early historian. From these numerals and other terms, students infer that the language of the Delawares was one of the highly developed Indian dialects.

### CHANGE IN COUNTY SIZE

Bond County, now one of the small Illinois counties, was among the largest in 1818. As the county was organized before Illinois became a State of the Union, it was represented in the Constitutional Convention of 1818 by two delegates.

In 1821 large slices of the county were shaved off to form Montgomery and Fayette counties, and in 1825, another large section became Clinton County. Bond County was then so small that a portion of Madison County was added to it in 1843.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### STATE EDUCATION LANDMARKS

Important parts of the Illinois public school system and curriculum, taken for granted today, were accepted only after long and bitter legislative battles during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

The compulsory education bill, defeated in 1877, on the ground that it was a menace to a free country and a forerunner of a compulsory state religion, was passed in 1879.

Physiology and hygiene were looked upon with disfavor by many, even after the subjects were introduced into the public school curriculum by state law in 1889. After a fifteen-year struggle the kindergarten bill, passed in 1895, received sharp criticism from those who called it a "fad."

### DEFEATED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A high Illinois bluff in Wabash County, known as "Patrick's Defeat," got its name from the ill-fated attempt of two Irishmen to build a dam and water mill on Coffee Creek at this point. Two brothers, Patrick and Thomas McGee, it is said, placed several hewed logs across the creek sometime previous to 1840. Their efforts to make the dam hold, however, were unsuccessful. The hewed logs are no longer there but the place retains the name of "Patrick's Defeat,"



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### LINKS WITH THE PAST

Illinois historians who seek to give a complete account of the changing life in the state during the past thirty years will have to look carefully at automobile license plates.

In addition to yearly changes in color, many different sizes, shapes, and arrangements of numerals helped officials to detect quickly any driver who thought that a license plate could be used for more than one year.

Occasionally, however, sizes remain uniform during a number of years, as, for example, between 1922-33, when the plates were long and narrow. Marked variations in size were introduced during the following two years, but since 1935 only slight changes in measurements have been made.

The year was not indicated at all on 1911 license plates, and in 1912 and 1913 it could not be readily noted. The custom of dividing the digits, by a dash, whereby the number of even a speeding automobile can be recognized, was begun in 1922.

### SCHOOL DAYS FOR FARMERS

As early as 1860 Illinois became interested in scientific agricultural instruction. A newspaper of July 26 of that year issued a call for a convention of the people of Illinois, to be held at Bloomington the following month, to devise some means of establishing a "permanent system of agricultural instruction on a practical and economical basis."



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MONEY AND MORE MONEY

The site of the town of Oquaka, Illinois, was originally purchased for the sum of \$200. Immediately the value of the site doubled and redoubled. One fourth of the original site was sold for \$24,000 in 1837, it is said, and shortly afterwards the buyer sold only a small part of this purchase, yet realized the full amount of his investment.

### GRAB BAG LAND ALLOTMENT

Early settlers in Teutonia Township in Effingham County, Illinois, drew slips of paper to decide what farms they would occupy. A 10,000-acre tract of land was originally purchased by a committee of Cincinnati Germans. The members then returned to Cincinnati with the titles to the property and arranged a "grab bag" by which prospective settlers drew slips of paper designating their portion of land. Later, the 141 pioneers migrated to Effingham County and organized Teutonia Township.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### FINE SPECIMEN OF A FAMOUS TREE

Perhaps no other Illinois example of the famous ginkgo tree is more noteworthy than the one preserved in Du Page County at Downer's Grove. This fine tree is cultivated widely throughout China and Japan. Its white, fine-grained, and easily worked wood is used extensively by the Japanese for small carved pieces, such as chessmen. Chinese consider it sacred.

According to naturalists, the mature tree often measures 10 feet in diameter and 125 feet high. It resists heat, winds, attacks from insects and fungus, and frequently lives for 1000 years.

### CONDUITS MADE OF WOOD

Some of the wooden pipes once commonly used as water conduits in Illinois, continued in service until early in the twenty century. It is said that the missionaries who stopped at Falling Springs, St. Clair County, to teach the Indians, harnessed the water by means of hollow logs and used its power to operate their mill.

As late as 1915, the rapidly growing city of Elmhurst, Du Page County, depended solely upon six inch wooden water mains leading from springs, three miles distant, for its water supply.





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## Stories from Illinois History

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### MAKING BOUNDARIES EXACT

Many land surveys were made in Illinois during the latter part of the nineteenth century. An instance of the need for such surveys was noted in the experience of an early settler in Cook County.

Immediately upon arrival there in 1846, he started farming a 40 acre tract, which, it is said, he purchased for \$2.75. A score or more years later, a survey showed that the original purchase embraced 140 acres. The error was attributed to the descriptive methods employed in fixing boundaries, which were picturesque but subject to misinterpretations. Sometimes landmarks used for such boundaries changed more than once.

### BOUQUET FOR THE BICYCLE

Bicycle riding, for both sport and transportation, was the subject of varied editorial and legislative opinion during the early years of its history in Illinois.

In 1881, one newspaper advocated keeping bicycles off the streets, asserting that they frightened the horses, and in 1891 a bill was introduced in the State Legislature to prohibit bicycle-riding "in cities, towns and on traveled roads." However, devotees went ahead with the promotion of their hobby, and by 1892, general acceptance of the "wheel" was shown by the publication of "bike racing" results in newspapers.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### COST OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

If an Illinois legislator in 1875 had succeeded in persuading fellow lawmakers to adopt his way of thinking, the State would now have no public school buildings that cost more than \$2,000 each. A Joliet newspaper reported a bill introduced in the legislature in 1875 which would fix "the maximum cost of any school building in the state" at that amount. Today's school authorities say that the larger, modern elementary school plants cost between \$100,000 and \$500,000.

### ILLINOIS AND SWISS MARCHING SONG

An Illinois resident gave to the world, a famous Swiss marching song. In a pear orchard on a farm south of Highland, Madison County, is the grave of Heinrich Bosshard, who lived in Highland from 1851 until his death in 1877. Some time during those years, Bosshard wrote Sempacher Lied, a Swiss patriotic poem commemorating the Battle of Sempach, fought in 1386 between the Austrians and the Swiss.



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## Stories from Illinois History

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### VANDALIA AND "INDIANS"

According to an early historical account, a wag succeeded in making some Illinois legislators believe one of his "tall" stories, and, as a result a famous city of the state got its name. When the site for a State Capitol had been selected by the first legislature, the joker pointed out that it should be Vandalia to honor and perpetuate the name of a great lost race of Indians, called the Vandals, who once inhabited the region! Unwittingly, it is said, the solons accepted the story and agreed on the name.

### CHINCH BUGS ON THE RUN

Hordes of chinch bugs created such havoc among Illinois grain fields fifty-one years ago that in desperation farmers in some sections stopped growing wheat, rye, and barley. Progressive Crawford County farmers, for example, initiated a movement to eradicate the pest by agreeing to raise no wheat, barley, or rye for three seasons. They informed the State Department of Agriculture of their action and started campaigns to interest grain growers of other counties.

### PRIZE FOR PLAIN FEATURES

An Illinois story current in St. Clair County for many years concerns a jack knife that went from owner to owner signifying that its possessor was the homeliest man in the vicinity. A stranger from the East met a man in Belleville, to whom he handed the famous knife, explaining that he had been instructed to carry it until he found a homelier man than himself. The knife was refused by the person accosted, who said that his brother should have it. The brother accepted it and later passed it on to a resident in a neighboring county, according to the story.



### TEACHING AND PATCHING

Sixty comely Illinois young ladies sewing seams in odd pieces of cloth, placing patches on worn garments, and working buttonholes became front page news in 1898.

The girls were taking examinations to qualify as sewing teachers in the public schools of the state. School boards demanded teachers with a practical knowledge of sewing, and examinations were devised to test the exact extent of their abilities in this subject.

In addition to the actual sewing quiz, tests were given in "textiles, physiology, arithmetic, algebra to quadratics, plane geometry, and the methods of teaching."

### REDUCING COLLEGE EXPENSES

Beginning a drive for endowment funds 103 years ago, an Illinois college sold perpetual scholarships entitling their holders, or their descendants, to send students free of tuition to the college as long as it remained in existence.

Two kinds of perpetual scholarships were offered at that time by McKendree College at Lebanon - one that sold for \$500 and the other for \$1,000. Holders of the first type, some of which are still in use, it is said, could send one student free of tuition forever, and the other provided for free board and room in addition. Certificates for some of the latter kind of scholarship still exist, but have not been used for many years.













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